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WALL

Volume IV - Spring 2004

# WALL

A LITERARY JOURNAL

VOLUME FOUR SPRING 2004  
SADDLEBACK COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
MISSION VIEJO, CALIFORNIA

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# WALL

Volume Four - Spring 2004 Staff

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*The Wall is a community space for creative expression.  
It is a printed canvas, a surface to be scrawled upon,  
a vast white page that invites our words and images.*

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# WALL SPRING 2004

## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>		<b>viii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>		<b>ix</b>

### POETRY

ADOLF ALARMED	<i>TODD JOHNSON</i>	<b>1</b>
THE BOY NEXT DOOR	<i>P.M. SHINTA WALEAN</i>	<b>14</b>
IN YOUR ABSENCE	<i>P.M. SHINTA WALEAN</i>	<b>15</b>
NOVEMBER	<i>P.M. SHINTA WALEAN</i>	<b>30</b>
I'D RATHER BE	<i>P.M. SHINTA WALEAN</i>	<b>31</b>
SOMETIMES	<i>VALERIE FOSTER</i>	<b>39</b>
BOYS AND STICKS	<i>CLAIRE FOULGER</i>	<b>45</b>
O STARRY GODDESS	<i>CRAIG HUNT</i>	<b>46</b>
PARIS IS PINK	<i>GWEN GRENROCK</i>	<b>70</b>
LOOKING FOR THE CHEESE	<i>JASON STEVENSON</i>	<b>76</b>
DEFEATING THE SHADOWS	<i>CECE MOORE</i>	<b>82</b>
HUNG UP TOO LATE	<i>CHRISTIE L. PARK</i>	<b>83</b>
SUBWAY SOUNDS	<i>JESSICA DUBETSKY</i>	<b>93</b>
GYPSY SOUL	<i>JESSICA DUBETSKY</i>	<b>99</b>
LIFE	<i>JESSICA DUBETSKY</i>	<b>103</b>
BEGINNING AGAIN	<i>JESSICA DUBETSKY</i>	<b>107</b>
THE CITY	<i>JESSICA DUBETSKY</i>	<b>112</b>

### PERSONAL ESSAYS

PAYBACK	<i>DAMON WOODS</i>	<b>11</b>
EVENING THE SCORE	<i>ALICIA HAMILTON</i>	<b>19</b>
DRAMA	<i>CHASE MADRID</i>	<b>27</b>
DANGEROUS FRUIT	<i>DAWN BROCK</i>	<b>40</b>
THE FIRE ESCAPE	<i>DIANE MARCUS</i>	<b>67</b>
THE CHRISTMAS TRAIN	<i>GERALDINE MURPHY</i>	<b>89</b>
EVERYONE HAS THAT PLACE THEY GO	<i>ANDY GEORGE</i>	<b>108</b>

### FICTION

MAY DAY	<i>GWEN GRENROCK</i>	<b>3</b>
LIKE A PANTHER	<i>SERENA WALKER</i>	<b>8</b>
ON THE TOWN WITH BEN FRANKLIN	<i>FRANCES COSTIKYAN</i>	<b>16</b>
IXTAPA	<i>LENORA DEMIASHKINA</i>	<b>23</b>
POLLYWOG POND	<i>JENNIFER PAYNE</i>	<b>35</b>
THE THING THAT STUCK	<i>JEFF CHO</i>	<b>71</b>
GRINGO SPIES	<i>RANDALL H. HAYES</i>	<b>77</b>

## ARTWORK

DELUSIONS	<i>TANYA CARR</i>	59
GOLDEN DRAGON	<i>CAMILLE KUO</i>	62

## PHOTOGRAPHY

GRAVITATING DARKNESS	<i>TODD JOHNSON</i>	47
RUSSIAN MORNING	<i>P.M. SHINTA WALEAN</i>	48
UNTITLED	<i>JOSEPH SMREKAR</i>	49
GUITAR	<i>JEFF WHITRIDGE</i>	50
GOAT WITH FENCE	<i>HILLERY S. BEEBE</i>	52
MASTERPIECE	<i>JARED COHEN</i>	54
SIX FEET ABOVE	<i>KRISTEN BISHOP</i>	55
CANDY GIRL	<i>GUY VAUGHT</i>	56
UNTITLED	<i>JEFF WHITRIDGE</i>	58
UNTITLED	<i>BRIAN LANNON</i>	60
LOOKING FORWARD OR LOOKING BACK	<i>KRISTEN BISHOP</i>	61

## STAFF SUBMISSIONS

JACK AND JILL	<i>DANNA DANSON</i>	32
THE WAITING GAME	<i>CAITLYN CLIFT</i>	43
FAITH	<i>CHRISTIE MAJORS AND STEVEN MCPHAIL</i>	51
ROCK CANDY	<i>MONIQUE COSTELLO</i>	53
CATS ARE US	<i>GALENA SEGAL</i>	57
REMEMBRANCES	<i>ANDREW BURGESS</i>	63
SILENCE	<i>MOLLY REID</i>	75
ON THE BORDER	<i>ANDREW LEVY</i>	84
A SPLIT SECOND	<i>LENORA DEMIASHKINA</i>	91
BLACK NAILPOLISH	<i>LAURA P. RUSSELL</i>	94
WHO AM I?	<i>GALENA SEGAL</i>	96
LIVING LEGEND	<i>MICHAEL MALLER</i>	100
KID SISTER	<i>REBEKAH POWELL</i>	102





# INTRODUCTION

There is a road I frequently cruise where all the answers lay themselves into little yellow lines paved ahead. Trees surround this three-lane road, always showcased in perfect lighting. The leaves attached to the eucalyptus and mulberry branches create a sort of light that allows one's mind to run freely into the subconscious. All distractions melt away as my mind steers the Pontiac around the bend. The bend, so slight and gentle, guides my mind back into the left-brain as the Pontiac glides by the ominous guardrail. The rail, bent and bruised, cries its desperate cries, warning the dreamers to snap back into reality and out of the puddle that the leaves from the trees whispered them into.

Inspiration. Inspiration is a mosquito that bites when you least expect it. Bubbling to the surface, the bite becomes inflamed. You can't help but to scratch it. Without inspiration, writing falls off the page into a catastrophic mess piled on the floor. This year's edition of the Wall is a representation of an entire student body's inspiration. Without writing, the world is dead. Words emote an air of artistic quality that stands throughout the ages of time. Several muses exist throughout the pages of this book-love, humor and tragedy. In this issue, I invite you to be inspired by a composite of the words from the hearts and minds of students at Saddleback College.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“THAT JOKE’S GONNA BE GOOD, BECAUSE I’M GONNA TAKE OUT  
ALL THE WORDS AND ADD NEW ONES.”

- MITCH HEDBERG

Every profession around the world has its own Big Question. For astronomers, it’s, “Are we alone?” Anthropologists search for the origins of humanity in the fossil record. Physicists ponder the construction of our universe. And major league baseball players try to find out exactly how much they can be paid for using a stick to hit a ball *really* far.

Writers and artists have a Big Question, too. “Why the heck am I doing this?”

Some writers spend hours of their time staring at white space, trying to fill it with words they expect others to read. Creators of fiction spend many of their most meaningful hours of the day in the company of persons that don’t exist, who tend to manifest themselves in their brains at inopportune times. Poets must capture images and feelings in only a few lines. Essayists are forced to recreate important moments in their lives, using only words to bring the readers there. Artists and photographers have no easier road. Capturing a moment on film or manifesting one from scratch is a difficult task, to say nothing of the wonderful aroma of paints, developing chemicals, and all the other tools of the trade that many artists claim induce gradual brain death.

Of course, you forget all the struggles the second you see your work in print. And that is one of the most rewarding experiences in creating Wall, year after year. But it doesn’t happen alone.

First, giant helpings of thanks are due to our new Faculty Advisor, Amy Sterling Casil, who has lent her valuable experience to our latest edition. Her advice and encouragement has helped make this magazine a success.

More thanks go out to Kevin O’Connor, Chair of the English Department at Saddleback, who has been incredibly supportive of the magazine since its inception. Without the contributions of Carolyn Kuykendall, the Associated Student Government, Mary Jane Roberts of the Emeritus Institute and the English, Photography and Art departments of Saddleback, the magazine would just be a dream and not a reality. And, as always, our thanks go out to Tableau Publishing of Dana Point, who continue to provide invaluable assistance.

There is one major difference this year, however, and that is the absence of Amy Ahearn, our Faculty Advisor for the first three years of the magazine. Without her hard work and dedication, you would not be holding the Fourth Volume of Wall in your hands. Though Amy is no longer working with us in the classroom, she will always be a part of the magazine.

Steven McPhail  
Editor-in-Chief



# A DOLF ALARMED

TODD JOHNSON

adolf hitler, I've abused you:  
 homicide in a foreign land  
 running through sugarplums and daffodils with odometers in your eyes and open  
 tears spout at the sound of flowers sprouting love-letters and guns  
 in the gross reunion of morphine doors, on the torn drug of your exodus  
 a golden oboe hums over the canal  
 a break in glory surges power  
 the man swallows his gondola pole  
 families vanish on snowy roads  
 brandenburg gate caresses its germ

1

adolf hitler, I found you:  
 hiding beneath my sofa with pistols swords and daggers in your sleeves  
 and blueprints unscrolling from your lips  
 "adolf," i said, "don't use my livingroom as your headquarters—"  
 "bonjour," he replied. "I am learning new languages. I've given it some thought,  
 and I  
 want to expand my horzions—"  
 "you could begin by paying the cable bill—"

adolf turns back to his television program and chuckles into his mustache  
 i hail a taxi to the equator  
 we float out and are olympic swimmers

"your writing has improved since we left the states—"  
 he said this in the river seine where we stopped for a drink and i showed him a  
 sample

# Wall Volume IV

“adolf,” i said, “i never understood what you did—“  
“i never wanted to be understood,” he said. “just believed—“  
murder snapped at my heels  
i split him open with a broken mirror  
and studied my reflection  
as wild dogs poured out

## MAY DAY

GWEN GRENROCK

Steve walked into May's life as she poured salt that rained into the shakers like the agricultural dust raining from the static Oklahoma sky. He dropped an old army pack next to a stool and smiled over the Formica counter as if she were the only person in the diner.

She calmed inside – a calm like Mama's hand clutching hers on nights when lightning teased.

He was a weather-beaten mess of a young man for 1954 standards, but something in the teenager that sat before her was different from the others – tropically unpredictable. He wasn't from Oklahoma, May knew. He lacked that dry, corn-fed look that the boys in her town had. His straight hair hung longer on the top than the bottom, and he didn't bother to wear a button-down over his tee shirt. He had been places and was rolling on

his way to somewhere else.

And when he noticed May it wasn't because she was one of the prettiest girls in town – the best that Norman, Oklahoma had to offer. She was suddenly more important on a grander scale, and at nineteen – a year after graduation and a year closer to spending the rest of her life desiccating in that small town – she decided not to let him blow through.

"Where ya'll headed?" she asked, and placed a Coke in front of him.

"Where are you?" The retort didn't come across as rude or indecent; it was a door opening, a hand extended. The world outside of Norman grew closer in his words.

"I'm leaving at the end of the summer," she lied. "But I haven't decided where I'm going yet."

He nodded. May had to up

the stakes.

“What’s your name?” she asked.

“Steve Gust.”

“Gust?” she drawled, picturing a stir of heavy moist air.

“Like dust,” he said.

“Certainly you’ve heard of that?”

“Have you heard of a shower?”

His eyes didn’t waver. It was as if he knew he looked good no matter how gritty he was.

“Do you want a place to take a shower?”

4      The house was a rising meteorological event.

“Yeah, sure,” he said, as if he really didn’t care.

May looked down the length of the restaurant. Sally was leaning into a table of truck drivers. She would be happy not to have to share the tips.

“I’m going on break,” May shouted down to her, then ducked under the end of the counter and opened the glass door.

Steve looked at her for a moment, as if debating the merits of this fork in the road. He took another sip of the Coke and slid off the stool. Swinging his pack over his shoulder, he followed her down a side street where the sky curled over them. Dirty hair spilled over his forehead

like a sheet of rain off a roof. He pushed it away, looked over at her, and flipped his head back. He would make no apologies.

Three blocks over, a large three-story Victorian house came into view. May glanced around as they approached. No eyes peered from the houses nearby; no window shades moved. She stepped over the low picket fence surrounding the tree-strewn yard.

“Hurry,” she said to him, and they ran across the lawn.

Up the front steps, she pushed the door open, and they stumbled inside. Steve regained his balance and looked up.

“Wild,” he said.

In the entry hall was a long staircase leading to stained glass windows that stretched up the back of the house. Light poured through, creating puddles of color on the landing. The walls, flocked with tornados of red swirling velvet, matched the design in the thick golden carpet. The house was a rising meteorological event.

“This way,” May said, starting up the stairs.

Steve followed her into a massive bedroom and dropped his pack as he eyed a cumulus canopy bed.

“You can shower in there.” She pointed to the bathroom where a curtain hung on a circular rod above a

claw-footed tub.

"Thanks." He nodded to her and flipped his hair again.

May scavenged for clothes and, when the spray stopped, thrust a pair of dungarees and a clean white tee shirt through a crack in the door.

"Try these on."

Moments later, Steve waltzed out to a gale of giggles from May. The tee shirt fit fine, but the pants were too wide around the waist, too short in the length. He had them pulled up as high as they could go on his tall frame, and the towel swirled around his head like a turban. At least he has a sense of humor, May thought.

From downstairs, they heard the large front door close.

"Oh my gosh!" May jumped to her feet.

"Are your folks home?"

"I don't live here," May said, as if Steve should have known. She ran into the bathroom and grabbed his dirty clothes from the floor.

"Whose house *is* this?"

"The guy that owns the diner. Get your shoes." She stuffed his dirty clothes into his pack.

"You're gonna get us arrested! I'm gonna get thrown in jail!"

He picked up his shoes, still balancing the towel on his head. May plucked it off and quickly hung it up.

"No you're not. Now come along and be quiet."

She opened the bedroom door, and they crept out into the hall. A man's grumbling voice echoed up toward them. They cautiously walked past the stained glass windows to another door in the hallway. May opened it, and they slipped into the servants' stairway. They stood motionless as the noise moved below them. Eventually, footsteps fell on the main stairs and then sounded on their level.

"Okay, now go," she said.

May led the way down into the kitchen and out the back door. At full speed, they crossed the long yard, Steve eventually passing her, all the while holding up the pants around his waist. They hopped the fence once more, rounded a corner, and stopped in front of a small house as clouds knotted above.

May laughed through her gasps. Steve dropped his pack and grabbed her shoulders, which crackled with current.

"What were you thinking? Are you crazy?" he asked.

She looked at him with a wide smile on her face. Her heart was pumping faster than it had her whole life. She was finally living, and she kissed him right there on the sidewalk, in front of every neighbor who cared to look. Thunder cracked, but the calm inside sunk to the bone as Steve kissed her back.

"You could have gotten me



killed, and I don't even know your name," he said.

"You never asked." Their eyes locked; neither one was about to retreat.

"Well, I'm asking now. What's your name? Who are you?"

"My name's May, and I'm your partner in crime," she said, smiling again.

Steve gave a small laugh and shook his head in disbelief. "Why did you take me there?"

"My mama used to clean house for him, and I used to help her when I was younger."

"Well, what if someone had been home when we ran in?"

"It's just old man Johnson who lives there. He plays cards at the bar in town all afternoon. Then he comes into the diner for supper. He does that every day. I knew he wasn't home."

"Well, he obviously changed his routine today. Why didn't you just take me to your house?" He picked up his pack again, and May looked at the bag.

"Because Papa would've been home and drunk, and my house ain't much more than a shack."

Steve didn't respond, and May worried that she had lost her appeal through her admission.

"Besides, I knew you could get some clean clothes there that old man Johnson's never gonna miss." She looked down at his pants that

were a reasonable length, hanging low on his hips. "They aren't too big around the waist. At least they won't fall off." She looked back at his face. "So where are you going, really?"

"California," he answered.

"Why go to California?"

"Why not? It's the land of opportunity, the Golden West. You can go to the beach every day, and it never snows. It's wide open, not crowded and soggy like New York."

"Is New York that bad?"

"No." He shrugged. "But California will be better."

Any place would be better than Norman, Oklahoma. She looked back toward the direction of the Johnson house. There was a good chance that someone had seen them running away. If old man Johnson hadn't caught a glimpse of them from out his window, then one of his nosey neighbors probably had.

May looked into Steve's face again. He looked so much better now, handsome really. His light brown hair had dried, and it shone in the sun like the wing of a fast bird.

"Take me with you?"

He smiled and shook his head.

"I mean it." She furrowed her brow. "I wanna get out of here. I want to go."

"May, I have no money. It's taken me three weeks to get this far from New York. It could take me another month to get to California."

“I have money. I’ve been saving tips for almost two years. We could take a bus the rest of the way.”

He pursed his lips, and she knew he was considering the offer.

“I promise I won’t get you arrested or killed.”

Steve raked his hand through his hair. She imagined he liked being clean and, after three weeks, liked the idea of sitting on a bus and the prospect of a hot meal.

He shrugged and nodded his head in that irreverent way of his, forecasting things to come, but May was calm, seeing only a rainbow forming in the west. He took her hand as drops began to fall.

Mama would be mad; she’d crumple up the good-bye letter and throw it in the trash. Then she’d be jealous, but in due course she would come to understand the folly of May.

# L IKE A PANTHER

SERENA A. WALKER

8

Marta Gonzales shook herself out of a half-sleep. Her vacation in Los Angeles was ending and the flight back to the Caribbean was tomorrow; only one more day to endure the noise, traffic, and tall concrete walls. Marta longed for the quiet, slow pace of the island. Primitive settings were so blessedly uncomplicated. She was always relaxed and more responsive to the children when away from so-called civilization.

Teaching second grade in Puerto Rico had always been a challenge and a joy for her. The balmy warm setting of the white-washed escuela nestled in the middle of an expansive beach was comfortable and secure. The low-lying structure was shielded by a stand of trees protecting it with their shade. Except for an occasional rabid dog or a scurrying rat among the

fallen coconuts, the peaceful setting was rarely disturbed. The threat of hurricanes and earthquakes was always there – acts of nature to contend with as mankind had always done. However, Costa-Rican born Marta had a sixth sense about pending earthquakes. Leaning against a door frame to confirm her instincts, she would instantly move the children out of the classroom into an open space, away from the palm trees laden with uncut coconuts, to await the affirmation of her fears. She had trained the teacher's aides – “Keep the children calm . . . use simple and quick instructions . . . walk fast, don't run . . . buddy system . . . take your partner's hand . . . no talking . . . Shh, Shh, quickly like a panther, children . . . don't be afraid.” No one ever doubted her commands in the middle of an emergency.

Marta brought her mind back to the present with all its homesickness. The palm trees near the motel in the Los Angeles suburb were the only reminders of home. The wind outside suddenly became alive and restless, rattling the closed wooden blinds swinging in front of the open bedroom window. She moved from the bed to peek out the slats and close the window. The wind assumed a life of its own, lashing in all directions. Gusts moved in circles with no place to go, like caged animals. Outside, the ornamental chimes jerked frantically, sending their staccato bell sounds whipping through the clattering palm trees. The palm fronds were making sounds of thousands of rustling papers and crackling embers. Suddenly a blanket seemed to descend on the scene and all motion was snuffed out. And then silence.

The silence was deafening and a haunting chill alerted a hidden sentinel in Marta's being. She could feel her heartbeat thudding in her chest, moving towards her throat. The wind had been alive and now the silence was threatening, like death. The young teacher glanced behind her to see the digital clock on the bedside table. It was 4:00 A.M. and the rays of the sun would not light the sky for hours. She stopped breathing to strain to hear one audible sound. She was never afraid of the known, only the

unknown.

And then the rumbling began, and the movement of an old enemy was under her, beside her, tossing her against the wall like a rag doll. The sleeping giant had flexed its muscles and emerged out of the depths of the earth, upending everything in its wake. She heard the building groaning and shearing apart. Furniture was flying and glass was splintering.

The all-engulfing movement pinned her down. Then, quiet, pitch-blackness, and the smell of mounting dust enveloped her. With a surge of adrenaline, Marta's legs came alive under her and she strained to push herself up. Which way was up? Dear God!

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you . . . Move . . . Get out – run. Where? Open air . . . Hallowed be Thy Name . . ."

Everything was a-jumble, even her frightened prayers. How do you move in a confined space in total darkness? She needed solid footing and air without dust. She coughed. The sound of bricks collapsing and dropping began again, as if they had been suspended in the air for minutes and then decided to fall.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done . . . will me to live . . . will the sun to move across the sky . . . give me light . . . kill the giant . . ."

# Wall Volume IV

She tasted blood in her mouth and she wondered where her shoes were. She felt light-headed and her mind sang.

“Ring around the rosy, a pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down . . .”

She whimpered and moaned. How appropriate the rhyme! Her body was folded like an accordion in the middle of the blackness. She heard ringing in her ears and suddenly she felt as if she were moving forward at frightening speed. Like a miracle, there was a blinding light inside her head, flooding her senses. She was becoming smaller and all was receding behind her. As her body slipped away from her, Marta’s last thought was:

10

“I am the light and the way . . . Shh, Shh . . . Quickly, like a panther, children . . . don’t be afraid.”

P

AYBACK

DAMON WOODS

I was at a friend's house one day and noticed a few paper shards in his back yard. I asked him what it came from. He told me that they were the remains from some exploded fireworks that they had set off at a recent wedding reception. Instantly intrigued, I asked him if they had any more; with a nod of his head he took me to a small wooden tool shed in the corner of the yard. He cautiously opened the old wooden door, which let out a loud rusty squeak.

He quickly closed the door half way and looked back over his shoulder. I could tell by his apprehension that he had been told not to go inside this shed. My curiosity was aroused; I wanted to know what was inside. He looked to the left, and then to the right, all was clear. He reopened the door and yanked me into the shed with him,

swiftly closing the door behind us.

The luminescent glow of a single light bulb pierced the darkness of the thick, hot, air. My eyes widened as big as saucers as I caught the sight of the rare image in front of me, a magnificent collection of fireworks, powder kegs, and explosives ever imagined. I stood before a devastating arsenal of destruction so immense, that it could have been rivaled by the US military. I rummaged through that shed for over an hour, when I saw the pinnacle of explosive performance, the preferred choice of malicious juvenile delinquents everywhere, the equivalent to the H- Bomb in the eyes of any child: THE CHERRY BOMB!

It was a small, round, red ball about the size of a walnut with a three-inch fuse. The name fit its appearance perfectly, undermining its

destructive force. Its power could crack cement, blow full garbage cans ten feet into the air, and if put into the wrong hands could blow them right off.

I immediately repositioned my nervous friend, "How Much?" "Ah...well. Ah...I don't know...I mean...I can't..." he stuttered in fear, as I retorted in a more serious tone.

"How Much?", I commanded. He quickly made me an offer I couldn't refuse, "Five Bucks!" "Deal", I snickered as I emptied out my pockets full of quarters. What a fool! I thought as I hurried home. I would have given everything I owned to get my hands on a weapon of mass destruction such as this.

It was a warm, crisp, autumn day. The leaves were falling, the birds were singing, and the sky was crystal clear. It was a perfect day for an act of terrorism.

The plan was in place and my conspirators took position. They monitored the outside entrance, ready to distract any faculty members with the old, "I have a tummy ache, can you take me to the nurses office" routine. At the tone of the lunch bell, two others would come with me and whistle if they saw anyone coming, while I would sneak into the faculty restroom, light the cherry bomb, drop it in the toilet and run like hell.

Everything was going to plan as I snuck inside the posh restroom. I

was appalled by how much nicer it was as compared to the student's bathroom. It had beige colored tile floors, walls accented with beautiful landscapes with nice wooden frames, and absent was the terrible, rank odor of urine and feces that constantly permeated the student bathroom. Gone was the crude, offensive, graffiti that enshrouded each and every stall. This unfair sight enraged me to the point where it made what I was about to do all the more enjoyable.

Quickly, I entered the first stall and withdrew the small explosive and a lighter from my pocket. I flicked the lighter once, twice, a third time. It didn't light. As I tried again, a chill went up my spine when I heard a panicked whistle that came from outside the door. "The jig is up! someone's coming."

My first reaction was to drop everything and run. "It's definitely not worth spending the rest of my natural life in juvie," I justified. But, something... an inner urge... drove me to try again. As my hands trembled out of control, I managed to clutch the lighter one more time. Frantically, I flicked it once, twice, three times. My entire body filled with fear as I heard heavy footsteps from a distance. An erratic whistle echoed through the hall desperately warning me of an approaching victim.

"Damn this stupid lighter," I shouted in my mind. With all my

frustration and anger I flicked it one last time.

“Ah!...” I was illuminated with the glorious blaze. With my hands still trembling in fear, I ignited the fashionably late flame to the delectable three inch fuse, dropped it in the toilet, and bolted for the door. As we all ran down the hall, I heard the heavy footsteps of a man turning the corner and entering into the bathroom.

Eleven seconds had passed and I heard nothing. “Maybe it was a dud,” I thought. “Maybe the fuse went out...” At that point, I was only relieved that we had made it out. Just as I was about to count my losses, my remorseful thoughts were interrupted by the most ear shattering, blood curdling KABOOM! that I had heard in my whole entire life.

Everyone around had dropped to the floor as if it were the end of the world. As I looked up, I saw a bewildered man stumble out of the faculty restroom drenched in foul, rank water from head to toe. A horrified look of shock traumatized his face, a look I will never forget. For a brief second, I almost felt sorry for the poor bastard until I realized who it was...*The School Principal*.

Nobody ever found out who was responsible that day. For a few months the teachers had to use the student's porta - potty while the faculty restroom was deemed “out of

service”. A few of us were questioned and put under surveillance.

But they never could find enough evidence to prove anything. Truthfully, even if I had been caught it would have been worth it to see the despicable look on the principal's face. Probably the most important lesson I have learned from this experience is ...*revenge is a dish best served cold with a cherry on top*.





HE BOY NEXT DOOR

P.M. SHINTA WALEAN

Harsh morning noises  
are no longer here  
to remind us  
of uniforms and bells  
relentlessly

Empty afternoon streets  
are no longer where  
we sit and play  
with guns and dolls  
silently

Secret evening doors  
are no longer locked  
to let me examine  
your hidden skin  
innocently

Thick midnight curtains  
are no longer open  
for you to watch as I put on a show  
shamelessly

I  
N YOUR ABSENCE

P.M. SHINTA WALEAN

I open the door  
and the sky awakes;  
its mirror below  
is silent and still,  
while nameless blossoms  
impatiently sway  
their fragrant bodies,  
wanting to break free  
from the dew's embrace;  
morning has returned.

15

Swollen eyes, amber clouds,  
matted hair, gentle breeze,  
broken nails, soft petals,  
aching feet, and warm earth;  
morning is mine again.



## IN THE TOWN WITH BEN FRANKLIN

FRANCES H. COSTIKYAN

16

“He deserves to be that big,” Mr. Franklin said after taking a long look at Abraham Lincoln’s statue. “He did save the Union. Still, I hadn’t expected to feel so jealous. My name on a bank in every town in America is not the same. Could it be I just don’t like the man? He spins a good yarn, but he’s too melancholy for my taste.”

We were in the City of Washington because of an e-mail I had sent three days before:

*Address: To whom it may concern.*

*Subject: Tour of U.S.*

*Message: If Mr. Benjamin Franklin wishes a one-day tour of the U.S., the writer will be happy to guide.*

Mr. Franklin’s reply had been terse: “Meet Franklin at dawn Tuesday. NW corner, Christ Church

*Burial Ground, 302 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA.”*

I’ve forgotten the details, it all happened so long ago, well before 9/11 and all that, but I do recollect I gushed when we met. Well, how often do you shake hands with your all-time hero? Mr. Franklin said he was glad to meet me, too. Nobody else had thought of him as a real person since the 1930’s, when Robert Lawson made him a character in the children’s book, *Ben and Me*.

I had several suggestions of places I thought represented America today and would interest him: a Circuit City store, a supermarket, a baseball game, the Kennedy Center. Mr. Franklin had only one goal in mind, our nation’s capitol.

I also had a notion of how we might travel. Rejecting Star Trek’s transporter method as requiring too

much equipment, I was about to propose the method Dorothy used in the Wizard of Oz. But before I could click my heals together, Mr. Franklin had, Santa-like, laid his finger to the side of his nose, and we stood at the base of the Lincoln Memorial.

“What about Thomas Jefferson?” I asked, hoping to shift my distinguished visitor’s attention away from Mr. Lincoln to a person more to his liking. “You two must have a lot in common.”

“We did...do,” replied Mr. Franklin. “I was pleased when he accepted my few amendments to his splendid draft of the Declaration of Independence. But I’d have been more pleased if he’d taken my advice on slavery. Had we abolished slavery right then and there, we might have avoided our second Civil War.”

“Second Civil War?”

“I’ve always considered our American Revolution a civil war. After all, the fight *was* between us and our mother country, England.”

As we left the Lincoln Memorial and began walking slowly down the mall, Mr. Franklin added, “These days the man I enjoy most is Albert Einstein. Like me, he enjoys pouring new wine into old bottles, applying new ideas to the familiar. With a more formal education, I might have been like him. And I love talking with beautiful women. I’ve always had a penchant for the ladies.”

“I’ve heard.”

“In the past, I was charmed by a well-turned ankle or a nicely rounded bottom. Meeting Cleopatra and Marilyn Monroe has made me realize how a lively mind enhances a pretty face. Intelligence gleams through lovely eyes.”

“Marilyn Monroe?” I raised my eyebrows.

“Only those who’ve actually met her know that, in addition to her obvious charms, Marilyn has a sharp mind. One fellow I thoroughly dislike, though, is Sigmund Freud. Ugh! Opinionated, self-righteous—a pompous crackpot. His ideas are nonsense. I yield to no man my delight in romantic dalliance. But the notion that commerce between the genders determines our every action—poppy-cock.”

The Washington Monument was now directly ahead of us. Pointing to the obelisk, I asked, “If Freud’s ideas were such nonsense, why did the planners pick that particular design to represent the Father of our Country?”

I took his silence as tacit acknowledgement that Freud had a point, and we headed into the Smithsonian. For the next several hours we were in and out of half a dozen museums. Mr. Franklin was especially charmed by the many interactive hands-on exhibits. He couldn’t seem to get enough of

pushing buttons and watching the actions they produced. Although I kept urging him to move along, as we had much to see in one day, he refused to be rushed. "There's nothing like observing for yourself," was his satisfied comment. "Not just hearing about things. These days all I get is talk, talk, talk. I enjoy a good conversation, but...the truth is, I'm a doer."

The shadows were lengthening on the mall and, though we hadn't scratched the surface of the capitol, I was eager to end our day at Windows on the World in New York City's World Trade Center. I could see Mr. Franklin was tiring; when I suggested, "Perhaps a cup of tea?" He readily agreed. So again we laid our fingers to the side of our noses and were seated at a table overlooking Manhattan and the East River.

Those of you who had the good fortune to visit the restaurant before the tragedy know how beautifully the framed windows set off each view of New York's rivers and harbor. To orient my guest, I identified the East River, the Hudson, Wall Street, Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and New Jersey.

"My son was governor of New Jersey," mused Mr. Franklin. "He was also a Loyalist. I regret we were not reconciled while I lived. Making up in the afterlife is not the same."

"One regret in eighty-four

busy years is not bad," I said. He smiled.

After a short silence, my companion excused himself to go to the men's retiring room. He was gone for what seemed an inordinately long time.

Returning, he announced he had just availed himself of the most delightful invention he had encountered all day. "Much better than the one I designed for my own home in Philadelphia!" he said. "When I arose from the commode, the thing flushed itself automatically. A superb combination of technology and function!"

Although the table at which we sat was still in daylight, to the West the sky was now a brilliant red, and the dark was gathering over the confluence of shining rivers beneath us. As we watched, here and there lights burst into glow.

Arousing himself, Mr. Franklin walked to the window and gazed down at the Statue of Liberty, America's only true princess. As a tiny helicopter orbited her head, the lights in Miss Liberty's crown began to shine. Mr. Franklin sighed. "Even a week would not be enough," he murmured. Then, nodding briefly to me, he stepped quietly through the glass and was gone.

# EVENING THE SCORE

ALICIA HAMILTON

Third grade; it was a year of elementary rivalry and competition. All sorts of new challenges lay ahead, things like multiplication and cursive handwriting. Our little private school was renowned for its third grade teacher, Ms. Thayer, who at five-foot-ten with sporting, long acrylic nails, seemed scarier than anything I had ever encountered. Every second grader knew that she was tough, but her classroom invoked awe.

In elementary school, once you enrolled into her class, you had officially “arrived.” Ms. Thayer had a special way of encouraging education with creativity and competition. To inspire match, she created a “Multiplication Mountain” where each student competed to reach the top with a paper car that moved up a level for every times table successfully mastered.

I hated that stupid mountain. Math to this day still confounds me, and then it just frustrates me. Yet, the creative story contests offered a more appealing avenue to flaunt my talents. More importantly, the most coveted prize in third grade lay in the unofficial status of teacher’s pet, something my little third grade heart earnestly desired. There is always a teacher’s pet, but our class had a handful of goodie two-shoes to be reckoned with. My archrival Chanel Lee pitted herself against me in a raging war to win our teacher’s approval. She used underhanded tactics, but worst of all, she was the class brat.

Like any good enemy, she decided to make me her new best friend, a ploy no doubt to spin her web of manipulation. Mothers are wonderful at encouraging friendships

that you would otherwise never pursue, and mine decided that Chanel was as good as any; besides, her mom was on the PTA, too. I had the pleasure of going to Chanel's house after much prompting from my mother, an experience I will never forget. Chanel was the only child of a wealthy family. She had her own horse, a Barbie mansion, a pool, and anything else a kid could want.

I remember being dropped off in front of the daunting house. It looked cold and sterile. As her mom answered the door, she yelled at Chanel to come and play. Play, is not the word I would use to describe it – *torture* was a more fitting description. Chanel decided to show off her pool. "Swimming seemed innocent enough," I thought.

A simple game of Marco Polo turned into a competition to see who could stay under water the longest. With asthma and a fear of water, I hesitated... and then I plunged in. Not a moment after I submerged, Chanel grasped my head and forced me to the bottom of the pool. Air was running out quickly, and panic seized my eight-year-old body. "This was the end" I thought, I just knew it.

After struggling to get free, she released her hold and my lungs gasped for air. I knew she was mean, but God, she was worse than malicious – she was evil! I jumped out and toweled off, trying to pretend

that it never happened. I wanted to go home, now.

I looked over my shoulder. Where was she? Wanting desperately to find safety inside, I headed to the side door near the garage. Chanel stood waiting for me, horsewhip in hand, and no ordinary horsewhip; mind you, this monster measured six feet at least.

"Be my slave," she screamed while attempting to whip me.

"Enough was enough!" I screamed. Once her mother arrived, Chanel put on her best angelic face and hugged me. I realized then that tattling wouldn't do me any good. She had pulled this off before. I made some excuse that I had to go home and called my mom.

While I was waiting for my mom, Chanel's mom decided that Chanel should show me her cat. I liked cats. They had a gray Persian tort shell named Fluffy. Chanel took me into the bathroom and pointed to the ominous buzzing box in the corner.

"That," she said, "is a gas chamber for the cat. If it ever misbehaves, we just put it in there."

I was mortified, but even more to my horror; she shoved the cat in and shut the door. I know now it was just a fancy litter box with an air circulation system to keep the odor down, but at that gullible age, I believed her. Her hideous laugh

cackled as she saw my anguish, and I pled with her to take Fluffy out. She did eventually.

The comforting ring of the doorbell alerted me that help had arrived. I had survived and would live to tell about it.

The next Monday at school, I vowed to steal Chanel's spot as teacher's pet; the demon-child couldn't deserve less the position reserved for the pure in heart. Yet, Ms. Thayer, still conned by Chanel's disguise, kept awarding her status after status. Chanel brought a dozen roses to class; our teacher melted. The next day, she gave her an apple. She always had the right answers and the right things to say. Only I knew the evil that lurked behind her sweet smile and mock politeness. I might have relented had Chanel not obtained the creative story prize.

Granted, I had won several times, but this meant war.

Chanel won the student of the day and was chosen to lead the pledge of allegiance. Her pushy personality got her the lead in our class play, while I was handed some cameo. Jealousy boiled in my veins, and then hatred.

How did she do it? Every recess, she would taunt me; challenge me on the monkey bars, swings, and handball. We got in a few near-catfights toward the end, but both of us swept them under the carpet to

preserve our reputations.

Finally, the last day of school was almost upon us. As much as I was sad to leave the room of my beloved teacher, I was grateful that I had at least three months before I would see Chanel again. I schemed up a plan to pay back the little witch once and for all. The night before the last day of school, I went into my garden and picked out a nice group of slimy snails.

I schemed up a plan to  
pay back the little witch  
once and for all.

Chanel loved chocolate, and boy did I have a surprise for her! I took my snails into the kitchen, sprinkled them with salt, and covered them with Magic Shell chocolate sauce, then put them in the freezer.

A few minutes later, my mom opened the freezer and screamed. Apparently the snails hadn't died with my application of salt and were roaming the freezer leaving chocolate trails behind them.

"What is this?" demanded my mother.

I fumbled some excuse about a project for the class and she let it be. The next morning, I took my frozen chocolate escargot to school wrapped in an old See's candy box with a letter to Chanel.

I placed them in her desk



before we all left. She looked at the gift and smiled. I smiled back.

She opened the letter and hugged me, mumbling something about me being such a good friend.

I couldn't wait for her to open the box, but instead she walked off and got into her mom's car. Chanel never returned to our school. To this day, I still wonder if she even got close to eating my creation.

It doesn't really matter. Doing something so rebellious left me with enough satisfaction to appease me for years afterward. I still recall those snails and smile. At least, I got the last laugh.

# I XTAPA

## LENORA DEMIASHKINA

Braced against the jagged cliff and lost in thought, Ixtapa stared across the thrashing ocean. As the merciless sharp wind whipped strands of thick black hair loose from her long braid, she pondered how to placate her goddess.

The vicuna ewes bore mostly stillborns this season; and of the ewes that could be milked, the milk was slight and soured. In her displeasure, the goddess brought in early deluges of rain that covered the crop fields too deep and too long. Aztecotl, the goddess of all that produces life, stunted the maize and blackened the cassava roots.

How did I offend her? Why is she so angry with my people? I gave her my firstborn, *my* firstborn, the future shamana, perfect in every way, no misshapen fingers or toes –

A surge of grief and

resentment swept through Ixtapa as her little daughter's face flashed into her mind, those trusting eyes that had dimmed into confused terror when the blood had drained onto the earth, her throat deftly slit by the high priest – her father.

What a fool I am. Ixtapa fiercely shook herself and slapped her forehead. No wonder Aztecotl is angry. My child never arrived to serve her. I kept her spirit with me. The shamana stiffened with angry self-loathing, pulled her wrap over her head, turned, and with resolution in each step, descended the steep trail back to the village.

At the foot of the cliff, Meltizca, her slave girl, stood ready to quench Ixtapa's thirst, a water bag made from a vicuna bladder slung over her shoulder. Taitao, the high priest, paced back and forth as he

studied Ixtapa's descent; then, he sprinted up the last hundred feet from the cliff's base to meet her.

"What did you hear? Did the goddess speak to you?"

"She is angry, Taitao, and we must send a special gift to soothe her. Send a runner ahead to the village and prepare the elders to hear me tonight. I know what must be done."

\* \* \*

On a summer's day three years ago, Ixtapa searched beyond the fields surrounding the village for a rare and sacred root to cure her child's chronic colic. She had rounded an isolated knoll and stumbled upon Meltizca probing the ground with a stick, her back-knap filled with dried dung.

As the merciless sharp wind whipped strands of thick black hair loose from her long braid, she pondered how to placate her goddess.

Earlier that year, Meltizca's home village had been raided and her family slaughtered. Too young for childbearing and yet whole in form, she was included among the captives brought back to Ixtapa's village and assigned the chore of gathering dry dung for the kitchen fires of the royal

household.

Ixtapa watched as Meltizca dug, and when she pulled out the knurled root, Ixtapa gasped, startling Meltizca, who cowered as the shamana approached.

Ixtapa grasped Meltizca's shoulder. "Stand up, child, and do not be afraid. How do you know of this root? Who told you? Tell me. You will not be punished."

Meltizca looked up. "My mother taught –" She hesitated, lost for a moment in Ixtapa's deep and probing eyes. "My mother was the healer in my village. It's for colic, for the baby of the cook's slave girl."

A subtle and unmistakable sensation flowed up Ixtapa's arm from Meltizca's shoulder as the young slave girl spoke. Ixtapa stepped back in astonishment.

There is the spirit of Aztecotl in this child, the same that speaks to my heart when I hear the whisperings of my goddess.

\* \* \*

That evening in the village, illuminated by the flicker of burning coals, the shamana solemnly addressed the rapt audience.

"My daughter's spirit did not complete the journey to Aztecotl."

After the din of their shocked reaction settled, Ixtapa continued:

"We must give Aztecotl

another, one who will be sure to reach her hearth. The spirit of this new maidservant must be released by all in the village. Prepare everyone, ready all the unmarried girls perfect in form. On the day darkness catches up with light, Aztecotl will reveal her choice and the special preparations required for the journey.

\* \* \*

On the autumn equinox at midday, the tribe gathered at the site of sacrifice. Accompanied by Meltizca carrying a plain folded wrap, Ixtapa wore her ceremonial headdress and cloak. They approached Taitao, who stood ready at the stone altar. Ixtapa walked to the front of the altar and turned to face her people.

“This is a special day for Aztecotl. We honor her as the giver and taker of life. She has chosen the one who will escort the spirit of my daughter to her hearth to appease her anger. The chosen one will beg for Aztecotl’s forgiveness and mercy during the dark nights of winter and cajole her pleasure during the births of spring. The chosen one -” Ixtapa paused and her eyes hardened into resolve as she looked out over the crowd. The expectant, fearful worshippers held their breath as one.

“Is me, Ixtapa. I carry the spirit of my daughter within me, and we will both serve the goddess,

prepare food for her table, and bring gladness to her heart and blessings to you, her children.”

The people stirred in startled protest and confusion while mothers stifled gasps of relief as they held their daughters’ hands, those that were prepared for sacrifice. Ixtapa raised her hand to quiet the assembly.

“Do not be afraid. You will not lose your shamana. Aztecotl has chosen the one to replace me and lead you in her favor. My servant, Meltizca, hears her whispers and does her bidding.”

The people froze in stunned silence as Meltizca stepped forward and Taitao, with a hard face, removed Ixtapa’s ceremonial headdress and placed it on Meltizca, followed by the shamana’s cloak. Expressionless, he stepped back.

Ixtapa stood, tranquil, eyes closed, and entered into a quiet trance as Meltizca addressed the people.

“We *must* assure the success of Ixtapa’s journey and the spirit of her daughter.”

Meltizca turned towards the high priest. “Taitao, this is what must be done: Let Ixtapa’s blood flow and nourish the earth, and then take her to the sacred burial site of the gods at the southern end of our valley. Lay her upon the ground as one not yet born, naked and wrapped in this birth cloth so that her flesh may feed our brethren in spirit – the fox, the

condor, the beetles. They will carry nourishment to Aztecotl's table, so our goddess will not hunger this winter and punish our people in her anger."

Meltizca turned back to the sea of astonished faces before her. "Set aside the best of your produce and prepare a mantle of feathers gathered from the royal flying sentries to speed Ixtapa's journey. On the day light catches up with darkness, Taitao will return to the sacred burial site and surround Ixtapa with our offerings and wrap her in the mantle of flight. He will position her towards the land of the living gods so she may soar straight and true to Aztecotl's hearth with the spirit of her daughter, and he will turn her head towards the sunrise so she may greet our goddess each morning with the rays that awaken the first gleamings of the royal flying sentries."

Taitao stepped forward and guided Ixtapa onto the altar.

\* \* \*

In 2002 A.D. at the ancient religious site of Cerrilos, 180 miles south of Lima, Peru, archaeologists unearthed an elaborate *fardo*, a mummy bundle, unlike any other of that place and time thirteen centuries ago. The *fardo* contained a woman from the Nasca culture, 25 to 30 years old, possibly a mother, with no evidence of violent ritual killing, that

was deposited in Cerrilos 900 years after the sacred site was abandoned by its original people. The Nasca *fardo* predated the Incas by centuries.

The bones evidenced that beetles ate the flesh through cloth. Her skeleton was surrounded by armfuls of plants, grasses, herbs, maize, peanuts, gourds, beans, and cocoa, wrapped with another cloth, and sewed into a bundle. She was buried standing up and facing south, but inside her skull was turned to look east towards the sun. Wrapped around the woman was an unusual feathered textile mantle made of 15,000 brilliantly colored feathers, topped by a yellow beaked mask with a red crest and two blue wings in a human-sized figure of a macaw.

# D RAMA

## CHASE MADRID

It was a cold day in January. A chill was in the air that gave me goose bumps. I was on my way home, when I got a scary call from my friend Brian. "Get over here now" he said. There was no excitement in his voice, no emotion at all. My mind raced, and my heart was soon to follow. "What was going on?" I thought. "Had something happened to Brian, had something happened to my roommate Jon?" I arrived seconds later at the apartment, parked, and ran with all my energy. I busted through the front door ready for anything.

To my amazement nothing appeared to be wrong, but looks could be deceiving. Brian was outside with his girlfriend Cait, and Jon was on the house phone. "What was wrong?" I tried to ask, but all I got in return was "Shhhh". Jon finally hung up the phone. "We are going to Huntington,

Chase", he said as he walked towards me. "Something must be wrong with Ashleigh, his ex-girlfriend", I thought.

You see, Jon and Ashleigh are the kind of couple that break up and get back together every other day. They act as if they are a ninety year old married couple. They bicker at each other over the most worthless things, yet there is still that effervescent sense of deep love. Something was wrong, and I was about to find out in a hurry.

As Jon and I raced to the car and drove to Huntington, he quickly told me about the nights events. It turned out that Jon received a strange call from Ashleigh. She made him promise not to come up to Huntington Beach after what she was going to tell him. Jon knew something was wrong so he didn't make any promise to her.

He knew he would be making that journey up the coast soon after that call. "I'm tying a rope", she simply told him. "What did that mean?" I asked. Jon knew she was going to try and kill herself. Jon is quite the expert on these matters. He witnessed his best friend's suicide as well as Ashleigh's previous attempt. After hearing those words spill from the phone, Jon made Brian dial 911. He took the phone and told them everything right away. The men in blue were on their way to Ashleigh's aid. Jon still had to go up to make sure she was okay.

28

We made that oh so familiar trip from Dana Point to Huntington Beach in about twenty minutes, driving at a constant ninety mph on the 405. That was the most uncomfortable twenty minutes of my life. I was powerless, I could only comfort Jon and pray to God that she was fine. Jon had the worst look on his face; words can't describe the pain in his eyes.

Looking at him made pains shoot through my heart. Not only was he dealing with this issue concerning Ashleigh but he was also battling the flu. Adrenaline had substituted the blood in his body and the veins bulged in his neck and face. After all the awkward silences and comforting words, we finally made it to Ashleigh's community.

As we pulled up to the gate,

two patrol cars crept out towards the street. Jon shouted to the officers to find out what was happening. The patrol cars inched forward a little more, and Ashleigh came into sight. She was sitting quietly in the backseat. We all made eye contact. Jon was silent. Ashleigh starred over with a sarcastic grin that chilled us straight to the bone.

We continued through the gate all the way to Ashleigh's house. We got out of the car and went inside to talk to her parents. They explained everything that happened. She fastened a noose out of a bathrobe belt and tried to hang herself from a pull-up bar in her room. Luckily, she couldn't withstand the pain and was able to free herself.

They told us they were taking her to a nearby hospital off of Beach and Talbert. Jon knew exactly what was in store for her, a nice long seventy two hour lockdown with no visitors. Jon just buried his head in his hands, in frustration.

Ashleigh's parents were very comforting to Jon, like a second mother and father to him. Jon had actually lived with them for eight months when his parents kicked him out. They took us to the hospital and we waited. It felt like an eternity, yet we were only at the hospital for an hour. During that hour, Jon made many attempts to see her but they didn't allow any visitors, not even her

parents.

Luckily, there was an extremely nice nurse who agreed to tell Ashleigh that Jon was there. That marked the end of the fiasco; there was nothing more we could do. We drove home that night in the most eerie silence I have ever experienced in my life. The silence was abruptly interrupted by Jon's mutters of blasphemy. He was tired, angry, sick, and hurt, all emotions at once. I sat at home with him and watched a movie. I don't remember the movie, and it's not important. All I know is, I was there with him and that's all I could do.

The next day, we went to visit Ashleigh but she had been moved from the hospital. They told us she was in one of three places and that legally, they couldn't tell us exactly which one. Jon had a hunch, and we went to one of the locations with a bouquet of flowers.

The man at the front desk couldn't tell us if she was there, and that the visiting hours were at five. It was only three, so we went to hang out at a friend's house. When we went back to visit, she refused to see him. After a while, she came out and yelled at Jon. "I never want to see you again, and you need to stay away from me and my family". Jon was angry. Under that anger, I saw that he was crushed. I couldn't imagine the pain in his heart.

Within a day of her release, she had apologized to Jon and the three of us were hanging out in her room, once again. It was strange to think that three nights before, she had tried to hang herself in that very room. The rope was still on the ground and you could see where the pull-up bar had previously been.

I sat there in awe as Ashleigh acted so normal, full of her usual sarcastic remarks and looks. Her stubborn attitude was so very present and so parallel to Jon's. They fit so perfectly together. "What would drive her to attempt suicide?" I thought. Days go by... life goes on... and another drama continues in Orange



# N

OVEMBER

P.M. SHINTA WALEAN

City,  
 your skyline betrays  
 every cupped hand,  
 your rivers swallow  
 the visiting peace,  
 and your air is scented  
 with discarded dreams.

30

City,  
 don't offer me songs  
 a hundred bowed heads,  
 or a raised fist;  
 my only solace is  
 finding a lone mourner  
 among the faceless vultures

City,  
 we lost a dreamer today;  
 your tomorrow drank his light,  
 but his pure silence  
 was mine alone;  
 on your numb streets,  
 I wait to disappear.

I  
'D RATHER BE

P.M. SHINTA WALEAN

I'd rather be  
a top drawer you always lock twice,  
a new chapter you're trying to outsmart,  
or a potted plant you water at dusk.

I'd rather be  
a slow-burning cigarette you swear to be your last,  
a crumpled piece of paper you curse at,  
or an old alarm clock by your bed.

I'd rather be  
a spiral staircase you're afraid to climb,  
a foreign word that teases your eloquence,  
or a foggy mirror you cry in front of.

I'd rather be  
anything but  
the girl  
who kissed  
with her eyes  
wide open.

## JACK AND JILL

DANNA DANSON

32

“I reckon he’ll propose” thought Jill, as she anxiously waited for Jack. She drew a bucket of fresh spring water from the well. “What a beautiful day” she thought, as she took a sip from the cool refreshing water.

Bright yellow daffodils danced on the grassy hilltop as the gentle spring breeze blew puffy, pink clouds across the pale blue sky. The clouds reminded her of the cotton candy that Jack bought for her at the county fair last week. Her mouth watered with luscious delight as she remembered how sweet it tasted, as it melted on her wet lips.

Jill was happy, for the first time in her life she was in love. “He’s so romantic, asking me to meet him on top of this hill. I wonder how he’ll ask me.” She giggled to herself with girlish anticipation. “Today’s a

special day”, she thought. Suddenly, Jack sprang from behind the well, and grabbed her in a passionate embrace.

“Jack!”... yelled Jill with startled delight. Her bright green eyes glistened with hopeful anticipation. She always loved Jack’s sense of humor and his unexpected surprises.

“Hello pretty girl,” whispered Jack as he kissed her tenderly on her lips. Jill’s heart raced. Every time she stared into Jack’s big brown eyes, she couldn’t help to imagine what it would be like to surrender to him completely. What it would feel like to be so consumed by his desire. Whenever he was with her, she felt like warm melted butter, the kind that Ma simmered on the hot stove and dripped from her mouth as she bit into the fresh, sweet corn from the field.

Oh, how he swept her off her

feet, as he held her in his big strong arms. She couldn't wait till their wedding night. She could then be free to surrender herself completely, beyond her wildest dreams... Sometimes; however, Jack's detached desire for her was overwhelming, and she feared her vulnerability.

"Hi Jack," whispered Jill, as she struggled to break free from his erotic embrace.

Jack couldn't let her go. Jill had grown into a beautiful young woman. Her soft voluptuous body, long dark hair, and pale white skin enticed him. Ever since he could remember, Jack often fantasized about Jill being his first. Today would be the special day to express his true feelings for her.

"I just can't help myself when I'm with you. I never felt anything like this before. I don't know how to explain it", confessed Jack.

Jack kissed her again. He unbuttoned her top and rubbed his hand over her soft white breast. Jill broke free from his strong grasp and looked longingly into his loving eyes.

"Now Jack, I have strong feelings for you, but you know that I can't go on any further till our weddin' night. Why don't you remember what the pastor preached in the sermon last week?"

"Weddin' night? Who said anything about a wedding night? You know I can't marry now, Jill. I want

to go to that place called Harvard and become one of them Lawyers. Promise me you won't tell my Pa. He expects me to be a rancher just like him, and take over the farm after he passes on."

Jill's heart sank. "Take me with you! We can get married and go to Harvard together," she pleaded.

"You know I can't afford to take you with me Jill, besides, I'll be too busy studyin' I wouldn't have time to spend with you."

"Oh, I see." Said Jill, as she bowed down her head, hiding her tears in despair. Jack gently lifted up her chin in his hands and smiled back at her. He then picked Jill up, and playfully twirled her around as he kissed her again.

"Let's not fret about the future, I want to be with you, just for today."

Jack put her down. He continued to unbutton her blouse as he kissed her down her long, smooth neck.

"Jack, I can't ... I want to do what's proper and wait till our weddin' night."

Cried Jill, tormented with desire. Jack ignored her and kept on kissing her. "You're so purdy, Jill, I dream of you every night." He whispered back in anguish.

Jill was torn. She didn't know what to do or think. She wished she could be bold like her girlfriend and

slap a man's face when he got out of hand, but she was afraid to.

Whenever she stood up to her Pa, he would reprimand her by smacking her across the cheek. She was afraid that Jack would do the same. She had to think fast. She remembered the bucket of water behind her.

“Oh Jack,” she giggled, as she struggled free. “I think you need some coolin’ down.” Jill playfully grabbed the wet slippery bucket of water. As she threw the water at him, she accidentally lost her grasp. The heavy metal bucket hit Jack on the head with a hard thug, knocking him unconscious. As he tumbled down the hill, he hit his head against a large, sharp rock.

34

“Jack!” screamed Jill, as she slipped on the wet slick grass and tumbled down the hill after him. “Jack, Jack, are you ...OK? Jill ran to him. She noticed the large bloody gash in his head. “Oh dear God . . . screamed Jill, as she tried to slap him back to life.

“No . . . No,” Jill sobbed. “Don’t do this to me Jack, don’t leave me like this,” cried Jill hysterically. Jack was dead.

## P

## OLLYWOG POND

JENNIFER L. PAYNE

I must have been around five or six years old, as best as I can remember. What is clear in my mind are the smells and overall feeling of the day. I was feeling particularly adventuresome and a bit naughty. No one had said a word to me or otherwise, I just knew we were doing something we shouldn't be doing. However, on I marched, feeling brave, defiant, and pleased to be included on one of my big brother's adventures.

Buckets and empty jelly jars in hand, we set off on our adventure. We crossed the road we lived on, passed by the comic shop (which was a book store we just referred to as the comic shop), and trudged through the empty field until we came to the forest.

It was a very warm day by English standards. It must have been all of seventy degrees Fahrenheit. I

was dressed in a summer playsuit; it was a deep blue with a pink pattern of some sort, with elastic around the top of my chubby legs and a ruffled bottom. I was without a T-shirt or socks; besides my knickers, the only other thing I wore were my plimsoles, which are rubber-soled shoes similar to American tennis shoes.

35

As we entered the forest, the temperature dropped slightly. I noticed the dappled light that graced the forest soil and gave it a rich warm brown color. The vibrant electric green of the ground moss and the forest ferns are burned into my memory forever, along with the musty smell of the living and non-living things on the forest floor. This forest was one of my favorite places to build forts and set up make-believe homes to play make-believe house. I could spend whole days collecting fiddle

heads and acorns, depending on the season. Grand forts could be fashioned out of those electric green ferns in the springtime.

On we marched, the ferns brushing my shoulders and neck as we pushed our way through their dense growth. An obstacle appeared ahead, one that I had never encountered before, as I never ventured this deep into the forest. It was a tunnel of rusty barbed wire, probably meant as a barricade to keep us in and others out – my father was a fighter pilot and we lived on a military base. The only way around this obstacle was for me to try to find an opening wide enough for me to squeeze through. My brother had made his way through and was well on his way.

In panic and in fear of getting lost, I tried to push my way through quickly, only to get my ruffled bottom caught, jerking my body backwards and forcing me to sit right on a couple of the barbs. It hurt, but not so much that it was going to stop me from continuing on this special adventure. I got up, careful not to get snagged again, and ran as fast as my little chubby legs could carry me after my brother. As far as he knew, nothing had happened. He was standing by a motorway looking both ways for traffic. As if it were a second thought, he looked around for me. Led by my little round belly,

with my chubby arms wrapped tightly around my jelly jar, there I was, not too far behind. Pleased with myself for not being too much of a bother to him so far, I grinned up at him, signaling that everything was all right and we could continue.

Crossing the motorway that my mother would drive down once leaving the base, my brother grabbed my hand and pulled me along until we reached the other side. Then he released my hand just as quickly as it had been grabbed. If anyone found out we were off base without permission, we would be in big trouble. This thought ran quickly through my brain and then disappeared. The real adventure was just ahead.

The cattail exploded, covering me in a cloud of float-in-the-air seeds.

We came to a forest clearing – an open space of high grass and a steep slope of dirt that I negotiated on my bottom and soles of my shoes until I was at the very bottom. My chubby arm was still tightly wrapped around my jelly jar.

There at the bottom of the slope was a pond of stagnant green water. Ringing the pond was grass taller than me and cattails ready to burst into seed. My brother, pleased with himself for our safe arrival,

pulled his T-shirt off over his head and turned, grinning at me.

“This is Pollywog Pond,” he said. Then, grabbing a cattail, he quickly broke it off and chased me with it. A short chase, but a chase nonetheless, after which I was hit over the head with the cattail. The cattail exploded, covering me in a cloud of float-in-the-air seeds. It made me feel itchy all over. I thought about crying, but then thought better of it, because our adventure was just about to happen and if I cried I might be sent home.

The time had come; we found a break in the wall of grass and made our way to the edge of the pond. There was a thin blanket of green growth over much of the pond. The green growth was the same electric green color as the forest ferns. The water beneath was cool and clear. The water was shallow around the edge of the pond and the sun shone right through to the bottom, displaying a thick layer of slimy mud. As we sat, being very quiet so as not to disturb the life of the pond, we listened. It seemed to be forever. Then we heard the “rabbit, ribbitribitt” of the frogs. We watched intently, waiting for the little bobble-head creatures with long tail-like bodies, the creatures this pond was named after, the pollywogs. This was what today was all about. We were going to catch pollywogs to take

home and nurture them into our very own pet frogs. We had no pets at home. Our dog, a miniature poodle, had been attacked by a very large ferocious dog that lived down the street. The owners were very apologetic, but this didn't seem to be of much consequence to my mother. She had really loved that dog. I hoped she liked frogs just as much . . .

Not very long after we set to being quiet and watching, a group of little pollywogs appeared. My brother quickly dunked his jar down into the water; the pollywogs darted off in all directions. Pulling his jar out of the water, we saw that he had captured two pollywogs. After seeing how it was done, I set off to another area of the pond, where I found a clearing all my own and squatted down to wait quietly for more pollywogs. I didn't have to wait long and, after several attempts, I had three pollywogs in my jelly jar. This feat made my punctured bottom and attack of the cattail well worth it. I must say, I was feeling very pleased. My brother was as well; he had even caught two frogs.

Our stomachs must have signaled to us when it was time to head back. I think we were both hungry and used that as a signal that it was time to go home. The trip home must not have been as significant because I can't recall it.



However, I can recall in detail our arrival home. About to burst with pride over my accomplishment of actually catching live pollywogs, I rushed inside the house to find my mother in the kitchen. Needless to say, I did not get the response I was looking for. In fact, I was taken by complete surprise when I was told, very angrily I might add, that I was to spend the afternoon after lunch in my room. My mom had a sixth sense, I thought – I hadn't even said where we were. What happened later that afternoon I shall always remember.

38 Janet Simmons and her brother had come over to ask if we could play. My mom explained to them that we had been bad and were being punished. As our punishment, she had cast a spell on us and turned us into frogs. My mom took Janet and her brother into the backyard and, pointing to the two frogs in the bucket, said, "As you can see for yourselves, there they are."

Forever after that day, my mother was known to all the kids on the base as a real witch, and if you didn't do as you were told, she would cast a spell on you. My brother and I knew better. But, then again, how did she know where we were?

## SOMETIMES

VALERIE FOSTER

she's a nun  
rising before the sun is up  
to praise a new morning.  
Laudamus Te.

she's a singer  
of jazz songs  
in piano bars.  
Ain't nothin' like  
reality.

she's Carmen  
at Disney Hall  
with Esa Pekka  
and the Phil.  
Je t'aime Don Jose.

she's mostly  
with her husband,  
drowsing in her chair  
curlers in her hair.  
That's Life, Baby.

39

# D

## ANGEROUS FRUIT

DAWN BROCK

40

“What is that over there? on the beach. Don’t you see it? I think it’s a . . . no . . . it can’t be!” I ran like a mad woman in a blue bikini down the beach, in one hundred degree tropical weather, I found what I was desperately seeking — a rotting blowfish. “Damn!” I said. What was I thinking? “A durian couldn’t be lying so easily on the shore unless... somehow it was eaten here.” I felt stupid, the feeling not as strong as my craving. As the shock wore off, and my heart beat returned to normal, I thought of how I became so crazed about a fruit.

It began in late June two years back. I arrived to Sumatra, Indonesia from Malaysia by boat. It was just a normal destination in my Asian travels. My goal was to arrive at Samsour Island, in the middle of Lake Toba. I heard about this place from a

couple of dread locked hippies from the Czech Republic, who sold jewelry in front of my budget hotel.

As we had tea, they told me of an uninhabited place where you can always be alone. The water so clear, you could see all kinds of wild life from the surface, with local Batak houses that were shaped like boats... I was so there.

I found the perfect spot, a huge red, white, and black Batak house with a balcony that you can jump right into the lake from. I opened my small backpack, and decorated with collected stuff from my travels, as you do when you plan on staying for a while. A few nights later, out to dinner, I ran into a fruitarian named Jeff, and his monkey. He was an expat from Australia. He fell in love with Indonesia, the people and the fruit.

We shared a splif and talked about the Batak house he just bought to live in with his monkey. After the second splif, we decided to make his home into a fun clubhouse where travelers can come over to experiment with nature and art. Jeff said, "Come over tomorrow, we will feast on durian and make some art!" I thought durian? What's that? I decided to voice my question. Jeff said that he would love to have the pleasure of sharing this unique fruit with me for the first time.

Jeff and his monkey were serious durian lovers. I soon found out there were many more just like them. We had to wait until the local children were away to uncover the durian. Before I laid eyes on it, I could smell it. When it was clear of kids knowing our plans, Jeff brought out something that looked like it could kill you. It was about the size of a human head with spikes all around it. (Kind of like pinhead from the movie, Hell Raiser, but the point of the pins on the outside).

Durians grow from trees and just like coconuts, they drop from the trees. Smart people use gloves to handle these fruits. Jeff explained to me that a ripe durian was one that started to open on its own. As he grabbed his knife and opened it, the pungent odor smelled like sweet dirty socks or something in the middle stage of rot. "You want me to eat that?" I said.

"People like it, or they don't. If you like it, then you really like it, if you don't, well, you can't stand it, not even the smell," he said.

"One of the most interesting experiences traveling is trying new foods," I thought. So, I tried it. I didn't know that I would be paying a huge price for this later down the road.

The color looked like butter. My tongue was overwhelmed. It was heaven. The smooth creamy fruit surrounding the nut melted in my mouth, I had no words to say. I ate and "mmmed" licked my fingers. The love between my taste buds was meant to be... I knew then that there was a God. 41

After three weeks of eating this fruit, I had also learned that this wasn't just any fruit that grew from just any tree. After devouring it, I then become quite warm, especially my stomach. The urge to jump into water after you fulfill your durian craving is great. It became a morning ritual.

I was told that you shouldn't cheat on it with other fruit. If you cheat, don't eat any durian as well. It causes for some serious acidity, even though durian isn't acidic. You shouldn't drink any whisky, or spicy hot soup around the time that you eat the sweet fruit. People have been known to die.

When I decided to leave Lake

Toba, I was a little apprehensive. I wanted to move on, but I heard that durian were scarce down south. It wasn't the season. I pulled some strength together and packed my bag.

I hitchhiked on the way south, through Sumatra. I didn't have the funds for the not so badly crammed buses, without any air-conditioning. It took a total of two days and a chicken feed truck to get to my next destination. The ride down was to remain in my durian memory forever.

42 The beginning of the trip was durian paradise for miles. It was a plethora of durian trees and the little old Indonesian woman who sold them. Every half-mile were rickety wooden stands with little old wrinkled ladies selling them. "Just the durian, only the durian" I said, in the best Indonesian I can put together. With my eyes opened wide, I asked my drivers, "If we could feast". They said in their best English, "you like?" I said "yesssss!" They laughed and said "Westerner like durian?" I nodded my head. We pulled to the side of the road and satisfied my craving. There was a stream nearby where we cooled off. This was better than any bus.

When I finally arrived on the island of Bali, durian was scarce. I tried asking all the locals. I heard that maybe inland on the island there were a few. There were a few, and they weren't selling. Not even at an

"unfair" price. I went back to the beach and that's where I found my unforgiving blowfish.

Back into the Asian melting pot of Bangkok, Thailand, I could eat durian once again, but without the lake or ocean. Each day I would have to make the decision between my fruit and myself, or whisky with my friends. In Japan, I had spicy soup and durian, I forgot, how could I forget? I sat in the shade and rested my belly.

Here in America, I eat it very rarely. You can find durian donuts (blah), shakes, candy and cakes, but it's not the same. A whole durian can set you back fifty dollars. I go to the Asian markets on the weekend to see what I can get. I have plastic durian on a table in my house. I have a durian magnet adorning my fridge. I had a t-shirt made with a durian on it. A tattoo might be next. Last night, I had a conversation with a Thai friend about durian, a whole hour talking about one fruit.

I do plan on going back to the land of durian, taking some time to eat and swim. But for now, it is just an ongoing craving I must save money for.



## HE WAITING GAME

CAITLIN CLIFT

The moist brown earth dampened the knees of Rose's black slacks as she kneeled by her father's grave. She wondered why she felt so little emotion towards her father's passing. "Is my heart made of stone? Am I inhuman?" she wondered. Why was it that the man who should have been the most important person in her life mattered so little to her in his passing?

"Rose, we should probably head on home now. Are you going to be okay?" asked her mother.

As they drove away, Rose pressed her nose against the glass of the car's window and watched the cemetery where her father was buried fade from view. Her breath formed tiny beads of condensation on the glass, and she heard her mother chatting nervously about all the things that they would do until Rose returned

home to New York. Rose wasn't listening.

Rose sat on her mother's chocolate brown sofa, her eight-year-old body bouncing on the cushions in eager expectation. Today was Monday. Visitation day. This time they had planned to go to Disneyland. Everything was planned, from the rides, to shows, to restaurants. They would go on the tea cups at least three times; it was both her and her father's favorite ride. Rose looked at the clock on the living room wall. Both hands were pointed to the 12. "Maybe he's running late, he'll probably call soon," Rose thought. She pressed her face hard against the windowpane, hoping that if she looked really hard for him that he would come.

She sat by the window the rest of the day, ignoring her mother's

invitation to eat lunch and to go to the movies. Rose feared that if she left her window-side vantage spot that her father would come to pick her up to go to Disneyland and that she would miss him. He never came.

“Disneyland was so much fun, Rose. Cheryl and I had such a great time. You should’ve been there. We got to ride on the tea cups four times. But I got you this even though you couldn’t come with us.” It was a picture of her father and his new girlfriend, Cheryl, posed with Mickey Mouse. It was in a white ceramic frame that had “Disneyland: the Happiest Place on Earth” written in gold script all around its circumference. “Maybe next time you can come, Rose.”

44

But there never was a next time. There were the occasional few hours spent together at the movies, or at the beach. But most of Rose’s Mondays were spent on the chocolate brown sofa, her face pressed against the window, waiting for her father to walk up the drive.

After waiting so many Mondays, it was easy for Rose to not need her father anymore. She learned to not wait around for his phone calls, and she learned to not believe him when he said that he would be there to take her out for the day.

But she missed the time that she had spent with her father. She missed sitting on his knee, listening to

him sing, his breath smelling like alcohol no matter what time of day it happened to be.

The week after her father’s funeral, Rose was getting ready to go home to New York. On the way to the airport, Rose asked her mother to stop at the cemetery. Rose kneeled by her father’s grave and placed there a picture of her and her father. As she kneeled, she began to weep for the father that she had lost, and she wept for the father that he should have been.

# B

OYS AND STICKS

CLARA FOULGER

Little boys are drawn to sticks like fish to bait  
They trace cement cracks with sticks  
They poke into mysterious field holes  
Sticks are tools for exploding ant hills and hornet nests  
Boys use sticks as toys to connect with puppies  
Who happily fetch and return for the meager prize of repetition  
Sticks make mesmerizing rhythms, dragged along a picket fence  
Sticks and empty boxes make short-lived first drums  
Sticks trace early maps in dirt and later a few hearts  
Watching little boys with sticks, gives one pause  
When one day they shoulder the stick, aim,  
And shout BANG BANG BANG!!!

45





STARRY GODDESS

CRAIG HUNT

Thou art a constellation in the nocturnal sky  
Bright and shining in thy beauty  
I gaze in wonder with mortal eye  
I reach... but cannot touch thee.  
I watch until the sun is nigh  
Then return each eve thou more to see.

46

O, starry goddess placed on high  
This, my prayer would be  
That when it is my turn to die  
Thou wouldst tarry o'er me  
And when the ages have gone by  
And when my soul's set free  
To thee, my love, I'll swiftly fly  
And spend eternity.

Spring 2004

GRAVITATING DARKNESS

TODD JOHNSON



47

Art and Photography

RUSSIAN MORNING

P.M. SHINTA WALEAN



48

Spring 2004

UNTITLED

JOSEPH SMREKAR



49

Art and Photography

GUITAR

JEFF WHITRIDGE



50

F

AITH

CHRISTIE MAJORS AND STEVEN MCPHAIL



G OAT WITH FENCE

HILLERY S. BEEBE

52



Spring 2004

ROCK CANDY

MONIQUE COSTELLO



53

Art and Photography



**M**ASTERPIECE

JARED COHEN

54



Spring 2004

# SIX FEET ABOVE

KRISTEN BISHOP



55

Art and Photography

CANDY GIRL

GUY VAUGHT



56

Spring 2004

# CATS ARE US

GALENA SEGAL

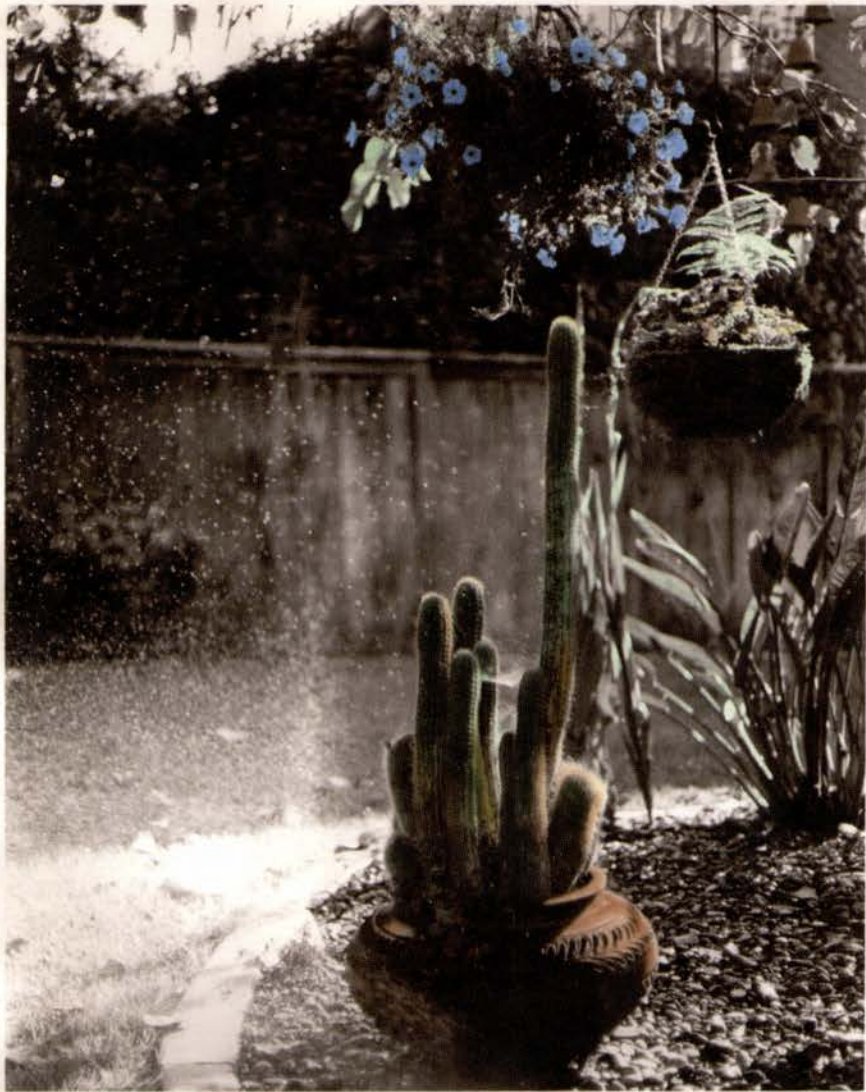


57

Art and Photography

UNTITLED

JEFF WHITRIDGE



58

Spring 2004

# D ELUSIONS

TANYA CARR



59

Art and Photography

UNTITLED

BRIAN LANNON

60



Spring 2004

L

OOKING FORWARD OR LOOKING BACK

KRISTEN BISHOP



61

Art and Photography



# GOLDEN DRAGON

CAMILLE KUO

62



R  
EMEMBRANCES

ANDREW BURGESS

The first thing the girl felt was the wind.

It caressed her face gently that morning and caused her to stir. Her consciousness filled her slowly, as though it was being borne to her on the same breeze that had wrested her away from sleep in the first place. She lay, letting the air play around her for what seemed like an eternity. Eventually, she sat up slowly, using her elbows at first for support and then pushing herself forward. It was only when she could feel that her body was shielding her face from the morning sunlight that she opened her eyes.

As she looked down at the clothes she was wearing, she began to feel uncomfortable. While there was nothing wrong with the plain grey dress she wore, she didn't remember having put it on. She didn't

remember the white shirt she wore on top of the dress. Looking over her surroundings, she didn't remember those, either. Where on earth was she? How had she gotten there? She bit her lip and ran her fingers through her long, thick black hair. This caused her even more confusion. Since when did she have hair like that? Probably for a while now, she decided. But she sure didn't remember it.

All of this caused her to pause. What *did* she remember? She thought about it for a minute. Nothing came to her. From her hair to her clothes to her name, she was a stranger to herself. Her throat tightened at this realization. She didn't even have a name? Something in the back of her mind stirred, and she let out a sigh of relief. Of course she had a name: Kiara. Having

63

remembered this, she calmed considerably. It still left her with a million things she couldn't remember, but at least she had an answer to her most important question. She couldn't go very far in life without knowing who she was.

Kiara looked around herself again. Perhaps if she managed to remember where she was, then her reason for being there would come back to her, too. There was no doubt in her mind that if that knowledge returned, then everything else would as well.

64 From her hair to her  
clothes to her name, she  
was a stranger to  
herself.

The rock face around her stubbornly refused to give anything away. Fair enough; it wasn't as though she was really expecting it to, honestly. Turning from side to side, she could see that she was probably a long way up a mountain. All she could see in any direction away from the rock face extending up was the blue of the sky. She crawled over to the edge of the rocks and looked down. Clouds. Panicking, she scrambled back in the direction of the wall as quickly as possible and stared at it intently. It was something to get her mind off the dizzying height she

found herself at. After a minute, she calmed and couldn't help but smile.

"Now I remember that I'm scared of heights," she announced to no one but herself. "And I guess I talk to myself, too."

That made two more things Kiara knew about herself now, for a total of three. It wasn't very much, but it sure was an improvement on one. She returned to studying her area of the mountain. Truth be told, there wasn't much more to it, and that disappointed her. It was just a bunch of rocks. Well, that and a nest with some very large eggs in it. The eggs were actually almost as large as she was tall, which she decided was extremely large for eggs – she distinctly remembered that eggs were for eating, only they shouldn't be so large if that was simply the case. She also didn't have any idea what kind of animal the eggs belonged to, and left them alone when they didn't prompt a retrieval of any further memories. It merely made her wonder again what she was doing in such a place and wish that she could remember something more useful than what she'd normally used eggs for in the past.

Kiara wandered around her small area of the mountain for a little while longer in the hopes that more of her memory would return with the assistance of the scenery. When over an hour had passed and nothing came

back to her, she decided it might be best to leave. As she came to this decision, her stomach growled, complaining of hunger. She patted it and nodded.

“We’ll get food soon enough,” she said quietly. “At least I hope so...”

This portion of the mountain didn’t really have anything to eat on it, either, so that was another good reason for her to leave. She scanned the horizon briefly and saw a dark shape off in the distance. It seemed to be getting closer, but was still too far for her to make out its shape. She turned away and, out of the corner of her eye, saw the nest again. Then it dawned on her. Whatever the shape was, it was most likely the thing that had left the eggs there. And that would mean it had to be big. Really big. A knot suddenly formed in her stomach, pushing her feeling of hunger away almost completely. She had to leave.

In Kiara’s initial inspection of her little part of the mountain, she’d discovered that the flat she was on had no trails leading to or from it. Where the flat ended in every direction, there was nothing but a drop – the side of which was much too steep for her to even attempt climbing down. She glanced back at the slowly nearing splotch of a shape in the distance and decided she’d better look again. Making her way over to the side of the flat once more,

she took a deep breath and looked over the edge. The height and Kiara’s fear made her head spin, but she found that if she squinted, she could just make out a path a long ways below where she was now. She pulled her head back and closed her eyes for a moment. If there was a path, then it was at least a ways down and away from... well, whatever the splotch was. And what the splotch was was something Kiara wasn’t particularly anxious to find out.

Kiara attempted one more search of the flat, hoping that she had merely missed the place where the trail below connected with it. As she moved about, she continually interrupted her search by glancing over her shoulder at the ever-nearing black splotch on the horizon. By this point, she could make out its wings, which just made her search more frantic. When she’d finished looking around the edges, she tried climbing on top of some of the larger rock piles on the edge farthest away from the splotch. What she found was no trail, but at least the mountain side wasn’t as steep here. She could probably climb down to the trail here. Probably.

Another glance at the now-winged-splotch made her decision easy. She could climb down from here. And, somehow, Kiara knew with all her heart that she could reach the trail below, too. She couldn’t tell

whether or not this was because she'd mentally pieced together the trail with this part of the mountainside, or because she remembered it from before. She decided to be optimistic about it and concluded that she had remembered it; it wasn't as though it would hurt anything if she was wrong, and every memory that returned to her made her feel good – even the mostly useless one about eggs. One last time, she looked over the part of the mountain she could see, wished it good luck with the big, black splotch, waved farewell to the eggs, and started off downwards.

66

She descended slowly at first, taking her time in getting used to the uneven, sloping ground. Eventually, she grew accustomed to the feel of the rocks and her small, careful steps grew more confident. As she descended ever-downward, Kiara could feel the wind blowing across her face and playing with her hair. It brought with it small memories, which helped calm her further. By the time she reached the trail below, she could remember more things about herself. Minor things only, like her favorite color – grey, explaining her dress – but they made her feel more whole. They made her feel like she really was someone.

The trail Kiara now found herself on gave her only one direction in which to head. This direction seemed to her a blessing and she

started walking, proud for having made it as far as she had. She smiled to herself, content with her success already that day. A single day could only bring so many things. The rest of her memories would return eventually. She just had to give them time. Until then, she could only continue forward.

The wind followed after her.



## HE FIRE ESCAPE

DIANE MARCUS

Echoes of children playing in the school yard four stories below spiraled up the fire escape and circled through the open window where my mother watched and wept.

During the winter months, when snow and sleet turned to ice, the low spots in the school yard of Public School 225 became ice ponds. My sister and I would rifle through boxes to find our skates, wrap ourselves in sweaters, fleece-lined jackets, earmuffs, scarves, and gloves. The gloves were attached to a long narrow rope measured the length of one arm, then threaded through one sleeve across the neck and down through the other sleeve. This ingenious method was to prevent loss and worked about fifty percent of the time.

Carol, five years older than I, was supposedly responsible for me, though my mother never left her vigil

at the window. On days when space on our ponds was a precious commodity, Carol would refuse to let me play. At those times I would be so angry I would wish my sister would disappear.

My mother was in love with Sonja Henie and wished that her graceful daughter Carol would become a dancer who would skate about Madison Square Garden dressed in white as her fur skirt swished about her thighs. She would proudly walk with us along Brighton Beach Avenue as we carried our skates, tied together at the laces, casually thrown over our shoulders. We would board the train that took us to Rockefeller Plaza where we would skate beneath the lights of the Christmas tree. Mother never knew that we preferred those little patches of ice in our very own school yard.

67

The winter of 1941 was the last time we ever went skating together. When Carol died the following year, my mother never mentioned Rockefeller Plaza or Sonja Henie again.

Even though I was only five years of age, I knew that when my mother viewed the crowds of boisterous children in the school yard rejoicing in their liberation at the end of another school day, she was looking for her daughter who would suddenly appear and look up to the window and wave. And then my mother would laugh again after waking from her long and tortured nightmare. I knew not to disturb her when she was in this trancelike state, for if she didn't work through her fantasy, she would cry all day. But even worse for me, she often would not allow me to play. She was fearful that if I left the house, I, too, could be fatally injured.

I can especially feel my  
mother's loving arms and  
feel her teardrops  
moisten my cheeks.

The black iron stairs of the slatted fire escape outside the kitchen window began zig-zagging up the wall at the second story, passing our floor and finally coming to a halt when it reached the roof of the six-

story building. Once in a while, someone's brazen child would try to climb this staircase, but was always stopped by another mother who loudly thwarted the attempt.

On the days that my mother would not let me play, I would grab spoons of different sizes on my way to the window. Ladles, teaspoons, wooden and metal, could create a cacophony of sounds, jarring even to the tone deaf when banged on the iron slats.

When the cold, wet winds subsided and were replaced by the ocean breezes only two blocks from our apartment, I was allowed to sit on the windowsill with my legs stretched out and resting on the fire escape as long as an adult was by my side. After the damp days of spring, the warm sun began to dry our bones. Sometimes I would be restless and fidgety, but I was always rewarded with my mother's comforting restraint, which felt more like tight hugs. I felt protected knowing that as long as I was wrapped inside her arms, I could nestle my head against her shoulder, feel the softness of breasts against my back, and feel her pounding heartbeat; I was safe and could not disappear like my sister.

From my fourth floor perch I could hear the bells of the Good Humor ice cream truck, watching as it approached my street from three blocks away. Using the spoons to

imitate the sound of bells, I hoped the Good Humor man would stop just below my window. Then my mother would take me downstairs for a treat, and once there, she would also let me play.

The fire escape, the fourth floor window, and the spoons conjure up memories so vivid that I can still close my eyes and remember the smells of the ocean, the sounds of the Good Humor truck and the taste of a chocolate-covered almond ice cream bar. But I can especially feel my mother's loving arms and feel her teardrops moisten my cheeks.



P

ARIS IS PINK

GWEN GREYROCK

70

Paris  
 Is pink  
 The sun  
 Rises  
 Yellow  
 From a  
 Blood Sky  
 Then turns  
 To rabbit ears  
 To baby blankets  
 To chewed gum pale  
 Full of cotton candy dogs  
 Dyed like Easter eggs  
 You are free to bend your  
 Elbow, hand turned out at the shoulder  
 Paris requires cigarette holders, given out on  
 Airplanes where crimson smoke  
 Is mandatory when the head  
 Is thrown back in exhaling laughter



# THE THING THAT STUCK

JEFF CHO

“Pa, come quick! Daisy’s gon’ fightin’ Angie again! She’s got Angie real bad!” Tommy squeezed out his plea shakily between his out-of-breaths.

“Goddammit, I swear I’m a give Little Joe a good piece o’ talkin’ to for selling me that skinny-ass, son of a bitch, crazy cow.” Pa spit as he followed Tommy out of the tool shed to the pen.

Tommy dragged his pa by the leg of his muddy overall to where the blood trails began.

“Sweet Jesus...” Pa whispered to himself. Tommy just stared.

Angie, a handsome, full-figured six-year-old was lying on the ground, stomach rising and falling listlessly. With each labored breath, more blood oozed from what remained of her mangled throat and udders. A darker, creeping flow

crawled and puddled around Tommy’s ankles.

“Sweet Jes...” Pa whispered again, quieter this time.

Daisy was leaning against the fence of the pen, 20 feet away. Jaw gaunt with leathery skin and stained blood, she panted. Tommy had no idea that cows could pant. Her hooves and back were red. Droplets of blood trickled in the grooves of Daisy’s emaciated ribcage and rolled crimson lines down her pale sides; it looked as if she had been marked by claws. Daisy’s big bovine eyes stared into Tommy’s from a distance.

“Pa...” Tommy turned to his Pa, who wasn’t there. All that stood between Tommy and Daisy were the decrepit pieces of wood and the puddle of Angie’s blood. Tommy felt small, like his wobbly reflection in Daisy’s big brown eyes. They

weren't dull or placid like the other cows on the farm. They were disproportionately large, larger than any Tommy had ever seen before, and seemed to be throbbing rhythmically with each breath. Tommy wondered if Angie felt the same, having been watched by those same eyes as he was now. For the first time, Tommy noticed Daisy's breathing, now that she was closer. She was wheezing asthmatically, struggling to maintain the hollow scratches of breath.

Bloody saliva foamed around her mouth, bubbling and deflating in syncopated rhythm with every labored breath. Daisy moved one of her blood-stained hooves toward Tommy, paused, moved another, paused again, but shorter this time, and then moved another.

"Cover your ears." Pa had returned with a shotgun. He lodged the butt against his shoulder and pulled the trigger.

Tommy had been to slaughterhouses before and didn't think much of them. But with the explosion and all the violent gasping afterwards, it could have been the end of the world.

"There's a lump in her throat," Pa pointed at the ground, "Somethin's stuck there. That's probably why she's sounding like that." Tommy saw it, a lump the size of a baseball that seemed to be spinning underneath stretched skin. "Go get my hunting

knife from the tool shed."

Tommy fumbled around in the tool shed for what must've been only a few minutes when Pa's shadow slanted at the door behind him. "Forget about the knife," Pa said flatly, hands hanging long on his sides. "Come back to the house and help me with dinner."

That night at the dinner table, Tommy noticed that there was dried blood underneath Pa's fingernails.

\* \* \*

Ever since that day, Pa had been acting funny. It was October now, Tommy had started school, so was not helping around the farm much, but Pa had always been more than able to handle everything by himself, which he hadn't done since Daisy and Angie died. Since that day, many more of the cows had died, and Tommy wished Pa would at least get out of bed and take a closer watch around the farm. Tommy wished that Ma was still around.

People around town started calling Pa "Sleepy," because of the way his eyes looked, all pudgy and red, like an insomniac. Kids in school started making fun of Tommy, calling him "Nappy" because of his Pa and his tendency to nap in class. Despite Mrs. Robinson's ire, he couldn't help it; it was so hard to sleep at night with Pa always being up and digging

around in the back. Tommy couldn't fall asleep to all the thuds and rolling dirt. In the middle of one of those nights, Little Joe came by to see what all the fuss was about, and Pa chased him away with a shovel. Little Joe told his buddies that weekend that if Pa hadn't tripped over one of his giant holes, Pa might've caught up with him and chopped him down for real. His buddies all laughed and bought him another beer.

When Tommy did fall asleep, he had nightmares about Daisy. One night he dreamed that Daisy was chasing after him, and that he was wheezing and screaming like a donkey drowning in quicksand. Another night, he dreamed that when he ran to Pa for help, Pa's outline grabbed him by the throat and lifted him off the ground, petting Daisy with his free hand, all docile and calm, like an executioner after a fresh kill.

Tommy sometimes wondered what it was that was stuck in Daisy's throat that day. He asked Pa about it, but Pa would fume and stare at him the same way as when he asked about Ma. Tommy daydreamed about it in class too, wondering about the thing that stuck.

\* \* \*

Tonight Tommy had that dream again. He had been having it a lot recently and had forgotten about

all the nightmares. Tommy woke up with a knowing smile to a drawn out, horrid scream that was not his own. It came from the direction of Pa's bedroom. Tommy felt like Christmas.

Tommy barefooted it down the hallway that separated his bedroom and Pa's. To his surprise, he found comfort in the darkness, the way it draped around him like his favorite Tigger blanket that Pa took away after Ma died. He stood in front of Pa's bedroom door. He could barely make out the words between violent out-of-breath wheezes through the door; it sounded as if Pa was unsure whether to swallow or spit out the dream-talk.

"No...it's mine...can't do that to me...but I found it first...it's mine..."

Tommy pushed the door open. It creaked with rust and unwillingness.

"Who's there? *Who's there?*"  
Pa screamed.

Tommy turned on the light in the hallway. His shadow grew tall, much taller than his age, engulfing Pa's trembling face. The pale patch of skin on Pa's forehead was taut, smooth and wrinkleless, and it seemed to pull his eyelids upward, which was the only plausible explanation for those eyes. Large, frighteningly, impossibly large, like the eyes found on train-track corpses. Streaks of red through his

exaggerated whites in a bloody  
thunderstorm. Pa clutched the  
spinning lump in his throat with his  
white but paralyzed knuckles and  
coughed desparately. His screams  
were muffled by beseeching gasps.

Tommy turned off the light  
and closed the door. Not yet knowing  
how to tie his shoes, he walked  
toward the tool shed in his bare feet.

# SILENCE

MOLLY REID

So much noise in our waking hours.  
Swooshing sibilance of freeway,  
The bubbling din of restaurant,  
All the beeps and clicks and sighs  
That distract, dissemble our fears.

A lot of children, and some adults  
Are afraid of the dark, the lack of outline,  
Where vampires and goblins lurk.  
But it's the silence that's scariest,  
The absence surrounding our sleep,  
Right before we dip into oblivion.

The tiny red light of the VCR is blinking,  
Glowing green numbers of the alarm clock.  
The lack of light is not complete --  
Moonlight, starlight, headlight, streetlight,  
Sifts in through the curtainless window,  
But there is no sound, no absolute sound.  
Soft scrapes and creaks I'm not sure I hear.

The din that was outside all day  
Funnels - sounds sift, lift  
And fold in on each other, become  
Demons whispering incantations,  
The lucid dream of the cochlea.

75

# LOOKING FOR THE CHEESE

JASON STEVENSON

76

Cramped freeways sucking into the funnel  
of a big city made small by twisting ramps  
tied around the veins of commerce or what  
passes for such in Los Angeles.  
The funnel is full of smoke and the skies  
become ever browner;  
the lip, a sallow gray, with quaint  
constructs decaying  
from industrial charm.  
Deeper, the billboards grow more vicious  
and the concrete roots sink down and out,  
absorbing the heart,  
till the being turns brown as the sky.  
If the rising towers are the center, downtown,  
then most circle around the sides when they must  
like spit swished 'round the drain in a sink,  
through the sprawling mass of mid-sized buildings  
that have spread like weeds that need to be cut.  
The Hollywood sign is a reliable landmark  
from any part of town.  
It helps one to pretend there is  
a reason to struggle  
in traffic akin  
to quicksand.

# G RINGO SPIES

RANDALL H. HAYES

"Isn't it amazing how things turn out?"

"We really stayed too long. We are way past curfew."

"I know, but we couldn't just leave; more and more people kept coming."

"How many people do you think there were – forty? ... fifty?"

"It had to be at least fifty.

After all, it was standing room only in some rooms. The living room held at least twenty-five; the kitchen, another ten; and on the porch, another fifteen – plus all the little kids piled up like puppies."

"Where do you think they came from?"

"They had to be neighbors."

"Yes, all the neighbors.. Ha-Ha..."

"And, the spirit was so strong. They were all very quiet and

respectful."

"I would say reverent."

"Even after three hours of sitting still, the little children stayed so quiet and intent. No one wanted to leave."

"I know, but my daddy always said to leave them wanting more. It was time for us to leave."

"You know," I said, "I felt a little like the Pied Piper when the children followed us down the road asking us why we had to leave and begging us to come back tomorrow."

"I know, but we are way past curfew."

"Don't worry. We are about the Master's business; he will do with us as He will. As long as we follow the spirit, we'll be fine."

"Do you notice something different?"

"Yeah, it's way too quiet."



“Let’s do as the prophet says.”

“Yes, Brother, let’s quicken the pace and lengthen the stride.”

“Bueno.”

Side by side, footfalls equal, parallel – a fast one-two, one-two – the Elders Tapiaz (Tap-y-ous) and Hayes move through the streets like mustangs over rolling hills, nostrils flaring – grasping at the sweet, rain-washed air as sweat rolls off the skin – heartbeats accustomed to the quick trot, elevated but not pounding.

There is no esaping the fact that we are different – two young men dressed as one might expect an dFBI or CIA agent to be dressed. White shirts with short sleeves and button-down collars constructed from heavy oxford broad cloth with double-stitch needle work, tie (*dejour*), black, light weight will slacks, over-the-calf men’s hosiery, black dress shoes (worn but polished daily), leather belt – drawn tightly – securing the slacks against the twenty-pounds lost since tailoring, black name tag clipped on white shirt pocket, short hair – bleached from the tropical sun – and a tan three layers deep, we are an anachronism in the tropical agrarian society in which we currently live. A farming community of 300,000 located on the northern coastal plains of Colombia – Sincelejo.

We are called by a Prophet of God, to serve and to love the people of Sincelejo. We are called to do the

things that Jesus would do if He were here. We put the needs of these people above our own for a year and a half. We teach, bless, up-lift, strengthen and baptize the people around us. Here in this small jungle town there are no phones, few televisions, and no local radio stations. The only way to do the work is to walk and meet people individually or in small groups. We walk 150 miles a week. We go everywhere, but it is impossible to reach everyone. However, the local chain of gossip works well. It is a common belief that we are CIA spies.

In Spanish, there is a command form of certain verbs. It asserts dominance over the listener.

We have a little rulebook. We call it the white bible. It lives in the white shirt pocket. In it are the rules by which we live in the mission field. The white bible governs what time we get up, our standard of dress, where we should live, and what time we should return home – *the curfew* – etc... The first and most important rule states, “Stay with your companion at all times.” Assigned to me, by the mission president, my companion is a brother. Even though we just met and he is from another

country, he is my brother. He and I have the same purpose, the same reason 'to be' – exist – (here). The standards are high. The only physical contact allowed between us and members of the opposite sex is a handshake and never in private. The only time I can be alone is while showering or while performing other bathroom functions. Every other moment, I must be in visual contact with my companion. The emotional and spiritual bond between companions is like the gravity of twin suns in orbit together – strong. My companionship with Elder Tapiaz is so close that each of us would give our life for the other, if it were called for. And, on this night, it is!

"How far 'til home?"

"Maybe, five miles left."

"Good, we'll be home before 11:30."

Walking as fast as most people run, the five miles will pass quickly. Our pace prevents us from easily exchanging words, so we do not. Our strides are perfect, synchronous, shoulder-to-shoulder, harmonious.

The streets narrow. Two and three story buildings, concrete block structures with bakeries below and family rooms above are pasted side by side for 1,000 meters. This is the business district. With no way to go around it, we must go through it. At this hour, we would usually hear the rhythm of family life going on above,

as we pass below. Sincelejoans like to stay up late and party – drink. However, this night is different. Our echoes are alone.

Then, from behind, a voice – young, angry, rough, the texture of burlap – it joins our echoes from down the street. It commands us to stop and pay attention. In Spanish, there is a command form of certain verbs. It asserts dominance over the listener. It compels the listener to obey the speaker. The command strikes at our nerves.

Impossibly far from freedom at the end of this concrete gauntlet, my companion and I slow down and stop. We turn to face the voice. A mob surrounds us. The mob, four rows deep, pulls in tight. All, fit men. Some loft machetes; others, clubs. The man with the burlap voice enters the eye of the storm with s. His knuckles are white from the grip on his machete. He is not the largest of the men, but his eyes have the fire. He spits forth venomous words like a cobra.

"Gringo spies [...] tonight your blood will stain the earth. You will die here in the street."

I stand still, erect, ready for the machetes to come down and fulfill his words.

*My companion... Elder Tapiaz... I would die for him if I could... I will die with him... with him if I must.*

Together, we enter the homes of the sick and ying to bless and give comfort. We counsel men and women, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters on how to love one another and live in harmony. We kneel long hours in fervent prayer pleading for the salvation and well being of these people. Always as a pair, we endure illness, hunger, plagues and infestations because we are called to serve these people. And tonight, we will die together at the hands of these people – misunderstood, mistrusted – a North American and a Colombian, both ‘gringo spies’.

80

No time passes. Elder Tapiaz steps forward, producing from his pocket a vial. His vial is as out of place as we. Machined from aircraft aluminum, small, the diameter of a cigarette, but half as long, it is highly polished and quite rare. I purchased it while in the missionary training center and gave it to him as a gift. In it he carries a small amount of consecrated oil. We use the oil anoint the heads of the sick or afflicted before administering a blessing. However, the mob does not know this.

The vial comes up to eye level. My companion’s outstretched arm places it halfway between them and us. His left thumb and first two fingers anchor the vial. The Elder’s motions and words are seamless, steady, powerful, dripping with conviction.

“Yes... let us all die together,” he says, while gently, slowly turning the cap.

Another half turn exposes the black rubber ‘O’ ring that separates us from what is inside.

Against the well-armed mob, we show no fear and seize the initiative with a tiny vial. A vial so small and precious, it must contain something very potent – lethal in their eyes. Having their worst fears come to life – that we are spies, dangerous spies, with dangerous spy gear – is too much for the mob. We are prepared to be killed by them; but they are not prepared to be killed by us.

The leader – burlap voice, his eyes twin moons – screams; the ultrasonic scream of someone who slams his fingers in a car door. Skittering backwards, he knocks down everyone crowded behind him.

We stand alone.

How much time has passed since we were commanded to stop? Thirty seconds? An eternity?

No words pass between my companion and me. Turning in unison, we are up to speed in three steps. We do not look back. Reaching the end of the block, we turn the corner, exchange a smile and break into a sprint. It carries us all the way home.

Usually when confronted with a sudden danger, a fight or flight

response is automatic. On this occasion the mob was ready for both. We gave them neither. The mob surrounded us with such great speed and in such great numbers that its action had planned in advance. The whole encounter lasted less than a minute. No time to reason. Only time to react. Jujitsu is a special kind of martial art that teaches its students to react by using his enemy's own momentum against him. Looking back, I see clearly what happened. It was emotional Jujitsu. I knew my companion's capabilities well. And I knew that he alone was neither quick enough nor clever enough to have done what he did. He was, however, a man of God; He was guided that night by the hand of God. My companion used their emotional momentum, their anger and fear of gringo spies, to speed them into panic. In that state, the horrifying scream from their leader, and the people falling down behind him as he fled, broke the mob's conviction like a glass on a marble floor.

Isn't it amazing how things turn out?

# D

## EFEATING THE SHADOWS

CECE MOORE

82 Flying away from the night  
The Darkness chasing, but never overtaking  
Always a step behind.  
Just as it inches near-  
We gracefully glide beyond  
Time...Beyond Light...  
Beyond Sound.  
But thoughts of you are  
Swifter,  
Constantly Overtaking me  
Playing catch up with my soul.  
Memories of you are nearer-  
More alive than the night, the day  
Sound and light.  
They travel on swifter, surer wings  
Flying into the brilliance of day  
So that I seem to be moving only toward you  
And not really away.  
And you are becoming my future, not the past.  
So that at this moment I am only now  
Discovering you for the first time  
And we are defeating the Shadows that chase my soul.

# HUNG UP TOO LATE

CHRISTIE L. PARK

Draped defeated over unloving mattress  
Like an old t-shirt too worn to wear  
Once made to fit your frame  
Free from attempts at adjustment  
Together we face the world  
Each with a task  
One to wear and one to be worn  
You tucked me in, I looked the same  
You cut my sleeves but I remained  
Made of the same soft cotton  
And durable stitching  
Which had cone moved with your laughter  
And absorbed your tears  
Now wrinkled and butchered  
I lay outgrown.

83



## ON THE BORDER

ANDREW LEVY

84

Herb Fredericks knew his job, and he knew it all too well. As he made his entrance into a Brownville, Texas restaurant, he made a visual review of the clientele, to see not only if there were people like him, but if there were perpetrators in the drug trade as well. Yes, old Herb knew his job.

A company man, Herb had learned his lessons years ago; they were now instinctive. He just turned fifty years old. 180 pounds of strength at six foot two, his hair with a few strands of silver, Herb looked good in his casual wear.

Herb did not live in Brownsville, he was just pretending to, for his job, for his mission, for this meeting. He normally lived in St. Louis, Missouri, with his wife of 21 years, and their two children, who were proud of their father.

Yes, Herb, after college at the University of Virginia, and with a law degree to boot, had spent most of his adult life in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A T-Man, who was proud of his performance to date and with this upcoming undercover meeting, could face a promotion. And why not, his service to God and country has been exemplary, with various certificates of awards to prove it.

It was September of 1991, and this meeting could put him over the top with his superiors. In the restaurant, Herb took quick stock of his three comrades-in-arms. First was Bruce from upstate New York, a seasoned field agent Herb's age, who kept a nine-gauge short-barreled shotgun in two parts under his vest. In his practiced hands, Bruce could be firing on-target in less than two

seconds. Bruce sat at the restaurant counter with Deborah from Wisconsin, who carried a government-issue Colt .45. She was thirty years old, but looked younger with little make-up and modest dress: blouse and skirt. Third was Slim, who would sit at the table next to Herb and the suspect. Slim liked his NATO-approved nine-millimeter handgun but kept a .357 rifle in his pick-up truck, just in case. Slim was 45 years old and looked a little older, a Texas native who knew this beat.

Herb thought he knew the suspect's type; from racial profiling, he thought he knew the suspect's profile. The suspect, Dale Salazar, was not only a drug dealer, but probably a drug addict as well. A constant partier, Dale went to the parties as a consistent moneymaker. Dale was the dealer, and the partiers were the consistent clientele. However, Herb believed Dale was a direct link to the black market of narcotics.

This one would be more than a feather in Herb's cap; it would be a definite promotion, maybe even a move to Chicago, or even Washington D.C. Herb would like that. However, back to the task at hand. Everything had been set up to Herb's advantage, without anyone else in town or the restaurant knowing what was going on. No one told the hostess and the waitress, who had to be kept in the

dark for their own safety. If Herb encountered any problems, the FBI would take it outside.

It was nightfall at the proposed time and the FBI was waiting for some action. The agents had all exercised that morning so they would be calm for the meeting that evening. With clear heads and sound minds, they moved forward into this operation, not knowing how wrong they were.

The restaurant that night featured a darkened dining room for more romantic engagements, a custom-crafted facility from its architecture to its interior decorations. The menu featured American beef-house as well as seafood, and customers could put the menu on hold while drinking at the fully-stocked attached bar, which hosted many a business meeting, from lunch through five P.M. It seated seventy-five and had parking for thirty or so, but that night the customer traffic was light, which was unusual for a Tuesday.

Herb sat quietly, slightly early for the meeting with Dale, and told the waitress Tina that he was waiting for a colleague before ordering, which was nothing unusual.

Dale Salazar grew up in Austin, Texas, and moved to Brownsville after he got his training at Southmost Community College to



be a pharmacy technician. He had worked at an Osco's pharmacy for ten years and retired on a meager pension, not because he was lazy, but because the drugstore chain had brought in a new pharmacist as his boss who was mean, and Dale was no longer willing to work in that situation. That is why he knew so much about the legal drug trade, but knew nothing of the black market until that night, after he had been racially profiled into a meeting with undercover agents.

The suspect Dale arrived, just a few minutes late, which was no big deal to anyone at hand. The authorities did not follow Dale, as this was a low-key operation. The hostess seated Dale at Herb's table after Herb had motioned to him. The two men started their conversation with congenialities, and soon the waitress was there.

"Hi, my name is Tina," the waitress said, and the two men, cordial with each other, ordered their respective drinks. There was silence because Herb was trying to think of three things at once and no words were coming out.

The drinks were delivered by the cocktail waitress in about five minutes and, after "thanks" and "thank you," they were left alone to drink, talk, and look at the menu.

Slim says quietly into his hidden microphone, "Everything is

go," and only Deborah perked up.

Herb started a conversation with Dale by talking about a fishing trip last summer, in case anyone was listening who wasn't supposed to be, actually a mistake in this town, as that kind of talk passes for interesting for the male side of its citizenry. Actually, some of the women in the town would have joined into the conversation with equivalent knowledge on the subject of fishing, or most anything else, for that matter.

The conversation soon got around to the matter at hand, and Herb asked some probing questions of Dale to see how much Dale knew about the drug trade, and what he seemed to know about the legal side of it, but Herb thought Dale was playing poker-face when he continued to deny any knowledge of the cocaine trade. Herb continued to talk and pry, and no one seemed to notice, but Dale perhaps, that Herb was teaching Dale about the illicit drug trade and specifically on how to import and distribute cocaine. That went on for 45 minutes, and then Herb realized what he had done. He had trained Dale to be what Herb thought he already was, the kingpin in the local black market.

"Oh no," Herb thought to himself, "Now that I've told him, I'm going to have to kill him."

Dinner had already been ordered and served but not eaten.

Herb thought, "I'll get this sorry ass out to the parking lot and do him out there!" He had no way to signal his compatriots, so instead he put thirty dollars on the table and said to Dale, "Let's go outside, I'll walk you to your car."

Dale agreed and the two men got up to leave. The waitress rushed over and asked, "No dessert? Oh, you haven't eaten, I'm sorry," she said and picked up the money. The two men exited the restaurant, and then Slim followed, along with Deborah and Bruce. Unbeknownst to the FBI, Dale had two friends, armed and waiting in the parking lot. The two friends, Frank and Chico, were watching from behind a parked car (not theirs) and had their hands on their holsters, but didn't draw their guns yet.

Herb stopped Dale and asked, "Which car is yours? Point it out to me."

"It's the white Honda Civic, over there." He pointed. He looked behind the car and saw the three other agents.

"Oh my God!" Dale shouted.

Dale's friend Frank shouted, "Hit the dirt Dale!" and Dale started going down to the ground.

Herb pulled his gun while trying to hold on to Dale's collar with his other hand.

Chico was first to fire and winged Bruce in the arm. Slim was ducking

for cover behind his pick-up truck, and Deborah drew her piece while looking for where the firing came from. Bruce ducked back into the restaurant, and Frank fired at Herb, hitting him in the shoulder. Frank and Chico were probably the best shots next to Slim.

Frank charged at Herb while firing and injured him; Slim shot and killed Frank, and Chico nailed Deborah, who didn't know which way to run. She fell to the ground, playing possum, though she had been shot near the stomach. Dale was also on the ground, shot through the lower back by ambidextrous Bruce as Dale fell to the ground. Both Dale and Herb were on the ground bleeding badly.

At this point only Frank was dead. Bruce was looking for Chico and so was Slim, who just climbed into his cab to grab the rifle. Deborah was frightened of death as sirens were heard in the not-too-distant night.

Bruce, grinning and bearing his pain, ran out of the restaurant and dragged Deborah to safety behind an SUV by the front door.

Chico shouted, "There comes the police!" as flashing lights met the sound of sirens flashing down the street toward the restaurant, and coming fast.

Herb thought, "Oh crap, this scene is a blowout," as he dreamed

his promotion faded away.

Then he thought of everything he did wrong, analyzing, then coming to grips with reality.

If they, the FBI agents, did not get medical attention soon, things could get worse for him personally; not only would he not get the promotion, but he could be demoted or even kicked out of the FBI. This was not a good situation to be in. His whole life was ruined. All that he worked for was now gone. Because of the black market, because of gunplay, because of selfish self-promotion, his career hit a brick wall and shattered.



## HE CHRISTMAS TRAIN

GERALDINE MURPHY

It lay in a corner of the hall closet among the pile of scarves, hats and lost mittens, a plaid cap with earflaps and a big shiny buckle. I picked it up and held it to my cheek. "Oh my God, it's Tony's cap. How did it get here?" Suddenly, I heard footsteps coming down the hall and Mama called out to me. In sudden panic, I shoved the cap to the back of the closet and under the concealing pile. "I don't want Mama to cry anymore and I know she will if she finds the cap."

Everything was so mixed up ever since that day I came home from kindergarten. I was so excited because my brother Tony's godparents had sent him a Christmas package and though it was three days before Christmas, he was allowed to open it. It had some new clothes, but the best surprise was the train with Mickey

Mouse in it. I ran all the way home just to play with it and him.

Papa had just returned from a shopping trip to the city to purchase new clothes for my older brothers. With a last lingering look at a pile of burning leaves that the young neighbor had lit across the street, Papa called my uncle Anthony into the house for lunch. Anthony came in and sat next to Papa.

Papa remembers serving him some cheese. He became distracted with the lively chatter at the table. I was in the kitchen when we heard the horrendous screeching of brakes. My brother, Chick, a young teenager, was the first to dart from the room. It seemed only minutes before he ran into the kitchen with an unconscious bleeding Tony in his arms. He screamed at me, "Get a towel, get me a towel." I took two steps and

completely froze. "Damn you" he shouted as he ran from the house. He stepped into the street, flagged down a car and had the man drive him to the hospital. When I went out to the street, I saw neighbors tending to mama who had fainted.

The family bakery was closed in the middle of the day, something I never remembered ever happening before. We sat up all night in the kitchen filled with aunts, cousins and neighbors. Mama was inconsolable. She wanted so desperately to go to Tony but was convinced by Papa and uncle Anthony that he would only be upset by her presence. She sat fighting all her natural instincts in the belief that it would be best for him. He died calling for and for his new train. Though she never revealed it, in her heart she never forgave Papa and uncle Anthony.

The following days confused me greatly. So many fun things were happening; we got to spend the night with Cousin Ruthie who told us so many scary stories, did an imitation of Carmen Miranda and even polished our nails. What would Papa say? The house was filled with all kinds of people and it seemed like a party. Mama insisted that Tony would lie for the last time in the home. I didn't quite grasp the finality of it. I would sneak behind the ferns surrounding his coffin and peer down at him. He looked so adorable in his velvet pants,

satin shirt and new shoes. Most unlike my scruffy, scraped up playmate. I remember riding in that big black car and smiling out at my friends as we made a last journey past the house. Thankfully, I have no memory of the mass or cemetery. I do recall a dream where I encountered Tony up the street in front of the Michaelson's house and we played with Sissy and Freddy. When I turned to him and said, "come on Tony, it's time to go home," he replied, "I can't come home with you".

Christmas was not a great time of joy for us for many years until my older sister took over and we celebrated again. Time and a new baby in the house seemed to push away those dark days and Mama no longer wept at the sound of his name or any reference to him.

Many years later, my Uncle Anthony had a tragic fall and died at the same hospital as my brother. On the final night of the wake after saying of the rosary and final blessing by the priest, the family gathered about the coffin for a last farewell. As my mother bent over she whispered something. My sister turned to me and said, "Did you hear what she said?" I shook my head and said "No." She said, "Kiss my Tony for me." Life and the responsibility of a large family made her get on with it, but deep in the recesses of her heart the little boy still lingered.



## SPLIT SECOND

LENORA DEMIASHKINA

It takes just a split second for life to alter irretrievably. The difference between life and death, innocence and irrevocable guilt — literally and figuratively — can occur within an iota of time.

I could have dropped my car keys between the bucket seats of my Honda Accord that weekday morning twenty years ago and cursed with profanities for the delay while digging them out.

Another person, a stranger who lived on the other side of town, could have lingered another minute stroking her cat (or spouse) goodbye, or cooing to her parakeets (or baby) before she left her apartment and walked to the bus stop for her morning transport to work.

But we didn't. And the stranger is alive — or was at the one and only time I ever saw her. And I

did not kill or maim. I did not create orphans or a widower or a paraplegic, and I do not wallow in guilt or avail myself of any and all artificial means to alleviate *feeling*.

That morning, barely aware of the surroundings flying by, I intuitively gauged travel time by how quickly I circumvented other moving cars — and did not see the pedestrian step onto the boulevard. The stopped vehicles up ahead dimly registered, but it didn't seep into consciousness that automobiles on a fast-paced boulevard stand still for a reason: a stop sign, a red light, a vehicle — a crossing pedestrian. Awareness of those possibilities did not break into my groggy state of unfocused morning haze.

In 20/20 hindsight, I believe that that unfocused, got-to-get-to-work-on-time mindset was a passive-

aggressive rebellion against the condition of my life back then — I didn't like my job, and yet felt compelled to stay in it. It's a contrived belief called powerlessness, and the pseudo-antidote is not being in the present.

In that split-second of passing the stopped vehicles, I peripherally caught a snapshot of the pedestrian's startled expression, her garments swished by air, violently penetrated as I sped through. With eyes wide open and mouth agape, she jerked to a standing halt just inches from the passenger side of my car as it sped by.

92 The ancient Hebrew King Solomon, renowned for his extraordinary wisdom and wealth, observed: *The swift do not always win the race, and the wise the riches, because time and unforeseen circumstance befall us all.*

Fortunately, at least at that split-second circumstance over twenty years ago, the swift did not kill.

# SUBWAY SOUNDS

JESSICA DUBETSKY

Walking down the Uptown stairs at Astor Place  
I was stunned and amazed at the gut-stirring,  
nerve-soothing sound of a woman's high harmony voice,  
like opera.  
I held my breath as I descended the last stair,  
looking for her;  
then moved through the turnstyle and saw to my right  
a gentle-faced gray-haired black man  
sitting up straight in a fold-up wooden chair.  
He held a saw handle under his right thigh and  
with fine sweet undulating control he played the saw with a violin bow.  
The voice of the saw sang with profound precision such highs and lows,  
Cascading, meandering, innervating.  
Immobilized, I felt all the gods and devils come together in reverence.  
Time stood still.  
On the express train now, going too fast, I should have stayed for just one more  
song.

93



# B LACK NAILPOLISH

LAURA P. RUSSELL

94 I want to be fearless  
 Wake up  
 Rub my eyes  
 Pour some coffee  
 Have a muffin  
 And then--on a whim  
 Dyed hair  
 &  
 Chipped Black Nailpolish wouldn't phase me

Trees outstretch their arms  
 Between telephone poles  
 Outside my window  
 While trains chug to and fro  
 Underneath a cloudy sky

Rusted Buicks roll  
 Down pock-marked streets  
 Wheels bump up and down  
 While children look out cracked windshields  
 Through windblown intersections

Crows sit atop telephone poles  
 Overlooking daily happenings  
 Peacoats pass through automatic sliding doors  
 At the corner deli  
 On route 571

Perfection breathes through this place--a blip in the radar--  
Realizing that it isn't about looking over-manicured  
But instead;  
History breaths and creates life  
Don't destroy it, embrace it.

# WHO AM I?

GALENA SEGAL

96

I'm a six-month-old unborn baby. I live in warm, dark water. Somewhere outside my mama's belly are my father and my sister. I know when they touch the tummy I live in. My father holds and cuddles my mother gently. He speaks quietly and laughs often. As for my sister, she kicks me with her boots whenever my mother picks her up. I feel her hands pushing on me when my mother nurses her. She talks all day long and often cries at night. My parents love her. "Imagine," they say, "This girl is only fifteen months old, but she speaks in complete sentences. She can even sing 'Russia, my vast, beautiful country.'" I hope they'll like me, too, when they meet me.

My life is boring here. I don't know whether I'm a boy or a girl. My mother's heart beats somewhere above me, and this sound always

makes me sleepy. From time to time, her stomach makes some strange bubbling noise. It used to frighten me before, but soon I got used to it and even find it amusing. I think her stomach is trying to tell me something. I wish I had another baby here with me. We'd listen together to our mother playing piano, or compete for a better spot inside her tummy, or just touch each other's noses. But because I have nobody here, I keep quiet, suck my thumb and rarely move. Maybe this is why my mother doesn't know yet I am living inside her tummy. Today, I heard her telling my father that she has gained some weight and feels tired all the time. She is planning to go to the doctor.

When my parents went to a doctor, they took my sister along with them. I was afraid my mother would carry her in her arms and my sister

would kick me with her boots, but my father carried her all the way to the clinic.

In the room, my mother stepped on a shaky scale, then climbed up on a hard bed and lay down. The doctor came in and started touching and pressing her stomach.

"I feel so heavy and tired," my mother nagged. "Maybe I eat too much? I'm hungry all the time. My clothes don't fit me anymore. Should I stop nursing my daughter?"

"Yes, you should," the doctor said. He tickled my protruding foot and stroked my head. Oh, it felt so good! "Come down slowly, get dressed and sit on the chair," he said. Then he called my father to come in. My sister jumped onto my mother's lap right away. "Easy, easy, young lady. You might hurt the baby," the doctor warned.

There was silence in the room. Then, they all began talking at the same time.

"You're wrong!" my mother cried. "I can't be pregnant! I still nurse my daughter!"

"A baby?" my father exclaimed, hugging my mother and stroking me all over. "Thank you, God!"

"I don't want the baby! I don't need the baby!" my mother sobbed.

"I don't want the baby! I don't need the baby!" my sister

whined.

"Haven't you felt any movement inside?" the doctor asked her.

"Very little," my mother said. "I thought it was indigestion. Do I have to have this baby, doctor? It is still very small..."

"Stop that mayhem!" the doctor yelled. "You're crazy. Go home and wait for the baby. It is due in about three months, whether you want it or not."

"Don't listen to her, doctor," my father said. "We want this baby. Thank you!"

"Don't thank me, thank yourself," the doctor said and patted me on the shoulder.

What a good man this doctor was; he'll help me, I thought.

Soon after, my sister was weaned, and there was no more kicking. I grew up faster. My father forced my mother to drink milk by quarts. I enjoyed the bubbling sounds in her stomach and felt my bones growing firmer every day. My sister still didn't want a sibling. She would place her toys on my mom's tummy and tell me she wouldn't share them with me. Big deal, I thought. She could keep them to herself. All I needed to get out safely and see my father. I hoped my mother would change my mind and love me, too.

One night, when my mom was asleep, I tried to turn around, but

there wasn't enough room to move:  
the walls around me were tightening  
and pressing on my body. I panicked.  
I didn't understand what was going  
on. Only when my mother started  
screaming, "Help! I'm in labor!" did I  
realize it was time for me to leave.

It took us, my mother and me,  
a long time to get rid of each other.  
Her contractions squeezed me hard,  
but I tried to help her with my elbows.  
She screamed so loudly that I could  
barely hear the doctor's voice, "Come  
on, baby, you're doing great!  
You're almost here!"

Suddenly I saw the light. It hit  
my eyes. I gasped for air and cried.  
An unfamiliar feeling startled me, but  
made me feel good. I was free!  
Several voices sounded around me.  
Swift hands dried me and promptly  
wrapped me in something warm. And  
then I felt the hands, the familiar  
gentle stroke. I heard the voice,  
"Hello, my little daughter."

Wow! I'm a girl!

# G YPSY SOUL

JESSICA DUBETSKY

I do believe I am a gypsy,  
deep down within myself  
where nothing is known for sure.  
Always searching, roaming the universe of Soul.  
Questions of how and why denied  
I gain acceptance, simply  
Become aware of this existence.  
The need for reason always leaves me  
perplexed and dissatisfied.  
Yet, Destiny's intangible path  
Encircles me...  
So that I move my feet,  
in wonder,  
to the rhythm of cosmic nothingness  
explore the universe of soul.

99

# LIVING LEGEND

MICHAEL MALLER

100 I'm not bored by very much. The only stuff that bores me is the stuff I'm supposed to be doing. School, my job at the 'Depot, cleaning any and all living areas I spill into... these I've had severe run-ins with. Heck, two of the three have even made sleep seem boring on occasion. Well, more boring, anyway.

With this in mind, I set down to make a plan: find an occupation suited to my . . . capricious nature. It took me two months, but I came up with one; and three months ago, when I definitely had something better to do, I left my living areas on their own recognizance and scooted off to see the world.

My travel method of choice was walking. That decision was influenced by several factors, and influenced several more. The biggest factors in my decision to walk, I

guess, were financial. The 'Depot doesn't like giving out lots of cash, and colleges and college housings like taking lots of cash. This, of course, lets out certain destinations where I wouldn't want to go anyway: Asia, where countries have too many consonants, and look like they were formed by a jigsaw gone mad; Europe, which has just as many languages I don't understand, and food several times more inedible. South America was on the destination list for a while, but then I realized I could get dysentery just as easily in Acapulco for a much cheaper price that I couldn't afford. That left Africa and Canada on the list of exotic locations. My reasoning against both, in reverse order: I don't need cheap prescription medication, and I don't want to need cheap prescription medication. Canada almost made up

for it with the promise of beer, but hockey killed it for me.

In the compiling of the above list, I realized that if I kept at it, I'd eventually find it cheapest to just stay home and get a different view by walking everywhere on my hands. Then I made a compromise: I would stay in and around Indiana, but would only eat in take-out places citing origins in exciting foreign locations.

Of course, I'd also need something to eat on the road. Drink is no problem — you can find a drinking fountain anywhere, and a liquor store in even more places. For food, I scoped out the specials at the aptly named Food Mart, and came away with a sack full of peanut butter and onions.

So as I said, I left my living areas on their own recognizance, and set out to see the Ohio River Valley. I found and followed some train tracks straight East out of Fort Wayne, until I got bored after about thirty minutes, and stopped off in an apple orchard. I found a wizened old tree with nice curvature at the base of the trunk, and two roots a little more than butt length apart, and settled myself down against it.

I closed my eyes for a while there, but didn't dream. I didn't sleep either, for that matter. The place was just too... eerie.

There was nothing younger than the trees. The tracks might have

been, but rail history isn't my thing. Nevertheless, there were no tall buildings within sight. No buildings at all, really, except for one little farm house crowning a hill near the horizon. There were birds singing in the afternoon sun, and apples' scent filled the air.

There had been a fence around the orchard once, but only the barest of posts stood as a reminder. Its job was probably to keep the critters out, like the fox that trotted through the orchard — at not too great a distance from me. I figured some fox in his family had felled the fence, and that having defeated man's structures, he wasn't too scared of man himself.

It was downright Thoreau-like until the train chugged past, and even that was a relic of a forgotten age. Hauling five coal cars low on the rails, it looked like it could cross the country, provided a little divine providence and a downhill course. The most remarkable thing about the train, though, was the caboose. It had one.

Two thoughts crossed my mind, and neither of them made me happy. The first was that the ghost of Washington Irving had made me sleep a hundred years backward in time, and the second was that the ghost of Mark Twain had made me fall asleep and wake up some time in the distant past. But, of course, I



hadn't slept. That fact kept my heart rate normal, anyway.

But a third thought struck me as I calmed down — a memory, actually. Before I worked at the 'Depot, I had worked in the gift shop of a museum in downtown Fort Wayne. The place was dedicated to Johnny Appleseed, and was in the middle of an orchard he was said to have planted until an office building orchard sprung up in its place. This was a Johnny Appleseed orchard that hadn't been replaced by an office building orchard, or a minimall garden, or anything. And it felt really homey there, even without key fobs smelling of freshly minted plastic.

102

Homey . . . eerie no longer.

Then I did sleep under the apple tree, until well after nightfall. I dreamt of the maps in the museum. I dreamt dreams of a wild countryside, fueled by the closing apple blossoms. I dreamt of my travel plan.

When I awoke, my plan had changed.

LIFE

JESSICA DUBETSKY

If "life's a beach" I've got sand in my teeth  
And life-grit knowing words flow off my tongue  
    Like deep sea water.  
Creature of the mysterious ocean,  
I swim with sharks on dry land.  
    And being quite light  
Burn red from over exposure  
    At high noon  
    And mid winter's moon.  
Balance dawns at sunset  
As the island guides the current  
    With mocking stability.

103

# KID SISTER

REBEKAH POWELL

“Kid Sister!”

104

I looked up from my work on the porch. Only one person ever called me that.

“Will!”

As he came through the front gate, I jumped up and ran to meet him. My mending, which I never was very good at, spilled across the porch. My braids thumped on my back as I went. Jumping into his arms, he swung me around several times before setting me down again.

“It’s good to be back again,” he said as we meandered back to the porch, his arm slung lazily across my shoulders.

Will, the son of our neighbors the next farm over, had left home three years ago, back in 1936. The Depression sweeping the country created hard times for us all. Will’s brother and father were there to look

after the farm, so when he turned 19, he set out to see what other work he could find in order to bring in some extra money for his folks.

Things were finally getting a little better. The economy had picked up a little and times were slowly becoming a bit more fruitful. Unfortunately, Will’s dad wasn’t getting any younger and needed help again on the farm, so instead of hiring someone, Will came home.

By this time, Will and I were back on the porch, mending picked up and neat in its basket. My older sister Angela had heard my commotion and came to the screen door to see what it was all about. She grinned from ear to ear when she saw him.

“Welcome home, stranger. It’s been a while.”

“Too long it seems,” Will smiled back, “Aren’t you the prettiest

thing anyone set eyes on, my Angel girl!”

“We hardly heard from you while you were gone. You’re probably in the middle of telling Sis all about your adventures, but you’ll have to start over now.”

We sat on the porch through the evening and late into the night, relating the details of the past three years.

The three of us had grown up together. Throughout the years we had been inseparable. There was only a year’s difference between Angela and Will; I was the youngster tagging along behind, but they never seemed to mind. Will, being the boy, loved looking for bugs to play with and dirt to dig in. Me, I was always willing to lend a hand; dirt was second nature to me. Angela, on the other hand, was the clean one.

One time she was able to sneak out of the house wearing her prettiest white dress before Mother noticed her. As Will and I were looking for bugs to feed the frog he had caught a few days before, he glanced up at her sitting, hands folded, watching our progress. The light from the midday sun seemed to be shining directly on her.

“You look just like one of them angels in the Bible!” Will exclaimed as he saw her. From that day on, he took to calling her “his

Angel girl.”

I was dubbed “Kid Sister” long before I even realized I had any other name. Will would come over to play and as he ran along the fence up to the front gate, he would yell for us, “Kid Sister! Angel girl!” over and over again until out we rushed, ready for adventure. Everywhere the three of us went there was a world of exploring to do.

And now that Will was back, our adventures, which had taken a brief hiatus in his absence, could commence again. Everyday after he was done on the farm, he would wander down the lane to our little farmhouse. Angela and I would be waiting for him. He would come through the gate, his tall frame perfectly at ease. Mostly these days we simply sat on the porch, talking and laughing with each other. Will and Angela would pull up their chairs and I would lounge on the steps at their feet. The two of them made a handsome couple sitting there, like a king and queen overlooking the kingdom. Will with his dark hair and sparkling green eyes that twinkled as he talked. His lean and muscular frame draped over the chair. And Angela sitting beside him as beautiful as could be. Her blonde hair would shine in the moonlight to take your breath away. She was a goddess.

I found myself wondering if they were in love. It seemed so

perfect, yet each time the thought flitted through my brain, I couldn't help feeling a little jealousy. I was and would always be the "Kid Sister." With Angela at his side, Will would never think of me as anything else. But I was so much more! I was only fifteen when he went away, gawky, skinny, and awkward. I wanted to be grown up—I wasn't a kid anymore. I would never be as pretty as Angela, but I was nowhere near ugly.

But why was I feeling this way? Could I have fallen in love with him? Oh my goodness. Would Angela be angry with me for this? Will would think it silly. I'm just his "Kid Sister." Oh well, get over it I guess—forget about it.

One evening, Angela didn't come out on the porch with us. She hadn't been feeling so well all day and decided to turn in early. I could have killed her! Since finding out I liked Will, I had become very uncomfortable around him. The awkward silences in our conversation that night grew longer and longer. I barely had my wits about me. I could tell something was eating at Will as well, but couldn't figure out what it was.

Finally, he broke the silence. "Do you ever think about what would happen if one of us got married? I mean, what if some fellow came in, swept you off your feet and took you away from me?"

Why was he worried about me going off to get married? He was the one who would end up with my sister? "What do you mean? How could I be taken away from you?"

"If some guy were to meet you, you might fall in love with him, and get married and I'd never see you gain."

"Don't be silly. I couldn't leave you behind, ever!"

"You mean that, Sis?" he asked. Something in his look was different from before.

"Please don't call me Kid Sister anymore..." I whispered.

He smiled then, and I knew. All my worrying and jealousy for nothing. All this time he was doing just as much of it. Unspoken words flew between us like wildfire in the next two minutes. He smiled again, leaned in toward me and whispered in my ear, "Only you. Always you."

I nodded in agreement, and we sealed it with a kiss.

# BEGINNING AGAIN

JESSICA DUBETSKY

I wake myself from infinite uncertainty  
each moment  
and realize how much more  
I understand that place  
than where I now am.  
My senses betray me  
Forsaking the truth  
For shades of green and too much fluff.  
I close my eyes and dive  
into the shadows to find myself  
delirious,  
basking in carelessness  
as innocent as new birth.

107

# E

## VERYONE HAS THAT PLACE THEY GO

ANDY GEORGE

108

Everyone has that place they go when their imagination takes over and they just zone out and forget about everything. For me that place is just down the street, a dusty old horse trail running alongside the creek nearby my house in San Juan. A few feet away from it is the winding cracked blacktop of the bike trail, with its broken yellow line running down the center. I remember riding my bike to school this way, weaving between the yellow lines like I was an X-Wing out to destroy the Death Star.

I don't know if it's sad or funny that I haven't changed much in all that time. I no longer ride my bike everywhere, now that my car has replaced it as my primary means of transportation, I only walk on that dusty old trail when I'm walking my dogs.

I still have an overactive

imagination though. I walk along, watching the brown and gray image of my German Short-Hair Pointer leaping over bushes like a gazelle. The wind gently blows the eucalyptus trees that border and shade Cooks Park, as I hear the birds chirp around me. For some reason, it's moments like those when my mind wanders away.

Have you ever seen a stick on the ground and picked it up, only to believe in your imagination that it's a sword? Probably, but did you do it when you were eighteen? I do, but not so much as I used to. I have the dignity to make sure no one is watching, or that at least I'm suitably hidden behind a tree. I'll swing the stick without any hint of skill, and for just that moment in my mind, I am a master. I wish I knew how to use it for real. I assure myself that if some

strange, savage swamp beast came out of the creek; I'd be prepared to break a stick on its head, gawk stupidly, and run off screaming like a sissy.

Other times, I'll be listening to music while I walk. Suddenly, images will bombard my brain... Lightning flashes around a dark silhouette. Green mist rises from white hot eyes, which stare down at me. A man spinning in chains appears, about to break a thousand glasses into shards. A camera moves in slow motion around his bald face, centering for a moment on the black crosses tattooed to his cheeks in atonement.

Another image of a man dressed in red, runs through a gigantic upside down clock dial, then explodes out of the glass with graceful wings springing from his back. My mind is like a comic book. I can never shut out what's in my brain and I never would really want to either. For those brief times when my brain is blocked, when I can't think of anything imaginative, I'm miserable. It's when my head is sparking off one impossible situation after another, which I am at my happiest.

I always talk to myself on those walks. Whether it's about problems in my life, or just talking to myself in general. I'm a philosopher, with astounding ideas when I'm all alone. No one to tell me it's already been thought of, or that it's a flawed argument. When I'm out on that

childhood trail, with the sun on my face, and the dog panting nearby, I'm always right.

Sometimes I sing, honestly I do. My voice is no way horrible, and I know this quite well. I'll sing at the top of my lungs while I walk on that trail, sing out my troubles, sing out my joy, or just sing for the sake of something to do. Sometimes I sing other people's songs, but usually I make up my own. The lyrics aren't all that creative, but once you've found a tune and a mood you like that day, it's hard to switch to something dramatically different.

Have you ever seen a  
stick on the ground and  
picked it up, only to  
believe that it's a sword?

109

I'll sing out at the top of my lungs, and listen to my voice dance and drop, in contrast to the vast calm silence, or the rustling of the trees. Suddenly, I'll step around a bush and discover a couple walking their dog, staring at me. I'll stop for a moment and wait until they're at least twenty feet away, before starting again. Realistically, I know they're still within hearing range, but it's the thought that counts, isn't it?

Sometimes my dog Rosie and I go down into the creek below the trail. I'll sit on the edge and watch



the little stream, while Rosie splashes in the water. She stops at a group of floating plants. She raises one front paw above the surface while she points her wet, brown nose down into the brush. She'll hold that position for thirty seconds before she realizes there's nothing there, or that the poor frog can swim. Then she'll move on to another, interesting thicket of plants, and repeat the process.

Sometimes I stop at a tree right next to the bike trail, and stare at a name I once carved into the trunk. The name of someone I used to walk with here, before Rosie. He was an Australian Shepherd, with black hair, a white chest, and light brown patches. His bobbed tail would wag occasionally, which was always a big highlight; but the thing I most noticed was his eyes.

One eye was half blue and half brown; the other eye was completely brown. His eyes scared most children, and also scared me when I first saw him too. One day my dad wanted to surprise me, he snuck the dog in a box, and left him in my room. When I went to my room to check for something, I found a wild eyed dog staring at me.

I screamed . . . he barked, I screamed some more, he howled and ran into the corner. Neither of us had much in the way of guts.

I thought he was a coyote and that somehow he got into my room

through the window . . . and managed to close it behind him. The fact that he looked nothing like a coyote didn't really matter, it was the principal of the thing. We named him Copper for those little brown patches, and he was my best friend for thirteen years. We'd walk on the horse trail together, and he'd stay close by.

For a while he was the Don Juan of dogs, sneaking out of the backyard to seduce the females around the block. Copper wasn't fixed until he was eleven, and only because of the possibility of cancer. Copper went camping with us, to grandmothers, and trips to school. When I was six, he would lick my hair as I got out of the bath tub. I took it as a sign of friendship.

Together we would pee behind bushes when we really needed to, until I was in middle school. I even dressed him up like Super Dog, and Bat Dog. We won a Pet Parade Costume Contest when I was eight, for dressing up like cowboys together.

When I was sixteen we got Rosie. Copper approved of her, and played with her as if he was a puppy.

A year later, Copper died.

I remember I lay with him, petting and kissing him in the vet's office. I tried to make him feel better as he slowly stopped breathing. After he died, I walked around my house alone, shouting out his name. At the time, I knew how over- dramatic and

silly it was, but I wanted him to come back. Copper always came back when I called him.

Copper and I had gone on a walk in this same place the day before. He had been slow that evening, with a slight limp to his walk. He and I watched Rosie bounce around in the failing sunlight. I could tell that he was admiring the trail like it would be his last time. His blue and brown eyes looked around the place. He sniffed the air and took it all in as he watched Rosie leap and frolic. I got the feeling he accepted Rosie completely, as if he was allowing her to keep guarding the family just like he had always done.

We stood next to that same old eucalyptus tree that he always used to mark as his territory. I later carved his name into it.

I put the leash on Rosie, and started to walk back, her tongue hung halfway to the ground. My mind slowly tumbled back to the present. We're finally home, ready to get back to the real world, to watch CNN and write hideously long essays. Welcome back, hope you enjoyed your trip.

Rosie's happy. She knows tomorrow I'll get up and grab the leash. She'll dance and prance around like the puppy she is, wagging her tail. Then we'll walk again, and for a moment, a long peaceful moment, we'll forget about everything and be

young again, she a puppy, and myself a child. So swamp monsters beware! I know a stick with your name on it... But the walk always ends.

T

HE CITY

JESSICA DUBETSKY

With quickness and stealth, I am consumed.  
Sucked in, then swallowed mercilessly  
By the sticky, infected tongue of the concrete tornado.  
Asphalt and brick,  
Funneling out of control;  
I scratch my way toward the eye  
In search of tranquility.  
Blinded by flashing neon and lit cigarettes,  
I take one last deep breath,  
And succumb...  
Floating above the smoke  
And beyond all that matters.

112

## Saddleback Wall 2004 - Staff Bios

Andrew Burgess is a Saddleback student who has inspiration for writing a number of things, a brief self bio notwithstanding.

Amy Sterling Casil is an award-winning science fiction writer. She has published one short story collection, three novels, eight nonfiction books, hundreds of articles and short stories, and she has taught at Saddleback since 2001. Thrilled to be able to work with the most wonderful, talented students in the world, she's also the mother of Meredith, the World's Best Dog Badger, and Adam, due July 2004.

Caitlyn Clift - "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."  
-Oscar Wilde

Monique Costello has a psychology degree from San Diego State University. Words to live by "Any idiot can make things complicated, it takes a genius to make things simple" -Albert Einstein

Danna Danson is an aspiring screenwriter and a graduate from Chapman University Film School. She is currently writing a trilogy of dark comedies about her crazy, eccentric Italian/Irish family. Her greatest inspiration comes from people's real-life stories about their families. These recollections reveal true character, and issues concerning the whole range of human emotion that we can all learn from.

Lenora Demiashkina will earn her associate's degree in journalism/geography from Saddleback College this year to enable a mid-life career change from industrial buyer to -- ?. "Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly." - The Dalai Lama

Andrew Levy is a Cal State Long Beach alumni with business degree. He thinks he has found something to do with it.

Michael Maller lives in his own little world. Maybe several, come to think of it. Then he writes about it... err, them. Ask him what color the sky is today.

Steven McPhail is a three time repeat offender on the Wall staff and a future Northern Arizona Lumberjack(and he's okay). He's currently working on his first novel, *Path of the Just*, trying to create his own version of NORMAD and refuses to speak to anyone that doesn't realize *Pirates of the Caribbean* is the best movie ever made.

Rebekah Powell is in her first year at Saddleback. She is majoring in journalism and would like to become a publisher. This is her first time contributing to the literary journal and is also on staff with the college magazine, Orange Appeal.

Molly Reid - "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth."  
- William Blake

Laura P. Russell is majoring in English with the intention to become a magazine editor after furthering her education as far as her heels will carry her. She enjoys ballet classes, T.S. Eliot and Jackson Pollock.

Pick up The  
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How Many  
WALLS have  
YOU built